ADULT EDUCATION & LITERACY AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN KENTUCKY

BY FORREST P. CHISMAN

for a project of the

Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy

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ADULT EDUCATION & LITERACY AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN KENTUCKY

A Case Study
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FOREWORD

Forrest Chisman's *Adult Education & Literacy and Community Colleges in Kentucky* is Working Paper 4 in a series being issued by CAAL in its task force study of the role and potential of community colleges in adult education and literacy. Findings are given throughout the report, but the Summary presented next, on pages i-vii, gives the major findings, issues, and recommendations.

As a national model, the Kentucky system is fascinating and instructive in numerous ways. To indicate just a few: Kentucky requires, through explicit statewide policy, a seamless system of transitions from adult education to postsecondary education; its adult education service is basically learner-centered and competency-based; it is one of only a few states that invests heavily in workforce education; community college presidents consider adult education service to be part of their mission and generally do a good job of providing traditional adult education services; and the adult education and community college systems work well together through an array of linkages.

Dr. Chisman concludes his report with two issues for national policy consideration: (1) Kentucky emphasizes and gets significant results through short-duration adult education services, and also in its workforce education and transition programs, but "the scope and accomplishments…are not captured very well by the federal National Reporting System (NRS) or other data sets." (2) Despite the priority given by Title II of WIA to transitions from adult education to postsecondary education and to workforce education, the federal government has not established explicit policies or funding to support either service.

CAAL is grateful to Kentucky Adult Education for funding the research phase of this study, which was carried out under a contract between Kentucky Community and Technical College System and the author. The research adds significantly to the understanding of CAAL's community college task force and should be useful to professionals within Kentucky and to policy makers and practitioners generally. The CAAL community college project and publication of its reports are made possible by funding from various other sources: the Ford Foundation; Household International; the Lumina Foundation for Education; the McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.; the Nellie-Mae Foundation; Verizon, Inc.; and several individual donors. CAAL deeply appreciates their support.

This report on Kentucky is one of eight studies contracted to help inform CAAL's task force project. The others include three additional statewide case studies (Illinois, Massachusetts, and Oregon), a five-state study by the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), a study of developmental education by the National Center for Developmental Education at Appalachian State University, a national survey by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges at Teachers College of Columbia University, and a national ESL study.

CAAL's web site, www.caalusa.org, lists task force members and project goals, and makes available in pdf form all publications in this series as well as other CAAL publications.

Gail Spangenberg
President, CAAL

SUMMARY:
FINDINGS , ISSUES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. POLICY AND ACHIEVEMENT

(1) Community colleges and adult education in Kentucky are under the governance of two different agencies, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) and Kentucky Adult Education (KYAE), respectively. In its present form, KCTCS was legislatively chartered in 1997, and adult education was legislatively reformed in 2000 by policy changes and additional funding.

(2) Since receiving their present charters, KCTCS and KYAE have established a remarkable record of accomplishment by expanding enrollments in high-quality educational services throughout the state. Far more Kentuckians benefit from community college and adult education services today than only a few years ago, and the numbers continue to increase.

(3) These accomplishments have been particularly impressive, because KCTCS and KYAE have much more ambitious goals than comparable institutions in many other states. In addition to traditional academic and adult education goals, both institutions are deeply involved in providing customized workforce education service and in facilitating transitions to further education. In fact, traditional adult education service (ABE, ASE, and ESL instruction for 12+ hours) accounts for only about one-third of KYAE's approximately 100,000 enrollments.

(4) The success of KCTCS and KYAE in pursuing these multiple missions is founded on strong and explicit state legislation that mandates goals and accountability and provides both institutions with the policy and financial resources to meet those goals.

(5) Community colleges and adult education are closely linked in many different ways. These linkages are based on legislation that elevates the status of adult education in Kentucky and that creates intersecting missions for KCTCS and KYAE. KCTCS is mandated to provide adult education, and KYAE is mandated to emphasize transitions to postsecondary education. Both systems are mandated to provide workforce education services and to collaborate in performing their overlapping missions. Specific policies of both institutions have also encouraged linkages.

(6) Kentucky is one of the few states that has in place explicit statewide policies that require a seamless system of transitions from adult education to postsecondary education. Among those practices are guidelines for assessment and referral of college applicants to adult education, a dual enrollment system, and sharing of technology and data.

(7) Kentucky is also one of only a few states that invests heavily in workforce education, and that has created a division of labor between adult education and postsecondary institutions in providing this service.

(8) Both KCTCS and KYAE have set ambitious goals for increasing enrollments. KYAE has set increasingly large enrollment goals for local programs each year. These goals, and the

incentive structures that go with them, strongly influence the service offered by local providers. In particular, they virtually require local providers to place more emphasis on short-term interventions in both traditional adult education and workforce services than is found in many other states.

(9) State level managers provide local institutions with policy tools as well as resources. They have set high standards for both the amount and quality of service, as well as for accountability systems. The managers see this support as a means of enabling local providers.

(10) Although comparisons across states are difficult, Kentucky appears to provide traditional adult education services that meet or exceed national norms (as measured by federal National Reporting System indicators), despite the fact that the state's goals for enrollment and extent of service (its emphasis on workforce education and transitions) are more ambitious than those of many other states. No data are available from other states to permit comparison of Kentucky's workforce education and transitions services with those in other states.

(11) One important characteristic of adult education service in Kentucky, regardless of the provider type, is its emphasis on learner-centered, competency-based instruction, rather than on standardized classes and curricula.

(12) Many of Kentucky's adult education programs specialize in short-term interventions that are aimed at filling individualized skills gaps and moving learners toward their goals as quickly as possible. This emphasis is partly a result of the state's ambitious enrollment goals and partly a result of the emphasis on selected workforce education services that can be provided in a few hours and at low cost. Ambitious goals effectively force local programs to accomplish as much as possible for as many students as possible in the most cost-effective way.

B. LINKAGES

(1) Kentucky's policy framework in these and other areas creates the potential for a rich interaction among postsecondary and adult education programs. But the leadership of key executives at state and local levels has been essential to make that potential a reality.

(2) At both levels, the aggressive pursuit of partnerships, both between KCTCS and KYAE and with other agencies has been key to success.

(3) Because of the large number of local providers (62 college campuses in 16 districts, and 120 county adult education programs) the full potential for linkage between adult education and colleges has been more fully realized in some areas than in others. Local leadership has been essential to success.

(4) As a result, Kentucky contains some community college/adult education partnerships that are national models. The national model programs tend to be large programs in urban areas, but they are also found elsewhere in the state. Local leadership appears to be as important as scale in creating successful linkages.

C. COLLEGES AS PROVIDERS

(1) One growing form of linkage is the role of community colleges as providers of adult education. In 2002-2003, 13 colleges provided adult education and literacy services, serving more than 18,700 learners – almost 20 percent of all adult education enrollments. Programs managed by local school boards provided adult education services to most of the other learners enrolled, but a few programs were managed by community-based organizations (CBOs) and other providers.

(2) The number of colleges providing adult education and literacy services has grown in recent years, because an increasing number of school boards may have come to view adult education as a postsecondary service. This has been particularly common in urban areas. Thus, most adult education programs based at colleges have enrollments that are significantly larger than the average for the state, because they serve areas with larger than average populations.

(3) College presidents in Kentucky have been willing to assume responsibility for adult education, because they consider this service to be part of the mission of a comprehensive college, and because they believe it will facilitate seamless transitions to postsecondary education. Financial incentives do not appear to play an important role in these decisions.

(4) Colleges appear to do a good job of providing traditional adult education services, and most programs are fairly well integrated into the lives of the colleges that manage them. But there is no evidence that colleges do a better job of delivering traditional adult education service than do other committed providers. Kentucky contains both excellent college programs and excellent school board programs. The state also contains examples of collaborative programs formed among several local programs (including colleges) to achieve economies of scale.

D. TRANSITIONS AND WORKFORCE EDUCATION

(1) KYAE and KCTCS are encouraged to promote transitions between adult and postsecondary education, and policies to facilitate this have been established. But the full potential of those policies has been realized at only some colleges. These colleges are, however, national models. And they have evolved toward a common approach that links adult and developmental education. In this approach, adult education provides free services to college applicants with the lowest levels of basic skills to prepare them for college developmental or academic programs. Effectively, adult education provides the lower level of developmental education for free. Barriers to implementing this model have been overcome by a combination of KCTCS placement and a dual enrollment policy, as well as local leadership. The resulting programs have impressive records of success.

(2) The division of labor found in transitions programs is mirrored by the success of model programs in the workforce education area. Adult education provides free assessment and short-term introductory courses in basic and applied skills, including soft skills such as problem solving and teamwork. Colleges provide more extensive customized and contextualized instruction in these areas, as well as in occupational training, through contracts with firms. Both KCTCS and KYAE services appear to be responsive to industry needs, because the demand for both is large.

E. CHALLENGES

(1) Despite their many successes, KCTCS and KYAE, as well as the linkages between them, are still works in progress. Given their short life spans, this is inevitably the case. Many local programs fall short of the standards achieved by model programs. The full potential of policy and resources that support linkages is not realized statewide. Progress in realizing that potential has been rapid, however, and state managers appear to be dedicated to a process of continuous improvement for all programs. In this effort, they receive invaluable support from robust computerized program information systems. Policy at the state level is data driven to a remarkable degree.

(2) To fully realize the potential of linkages between colleges and adult education, Kentucky policy makers will have to address the question of how best to take to scale the lessons learned from model programs. KCTCS and KYAE leaders are aware of this, and of the following particular issues.

F. ISSUES

(1) Some years ago, there was a state-level policy discussion about merging KCTCS and KYAE; the option was rejected. The topic is still sometimes discussed by managers at the local program level. Based on the research conducted for this report, however, there seems to be no reason to pursue a merger at the present time. There are outstanding examples of services offered by both colleges and other providers. Although there seems to be a statewide trend toward more colleges becoming adult education providers, there appears to be no compelling reason to mandate this arrangement.

(2) Although all colleges need not be providers, a compelling case can be made that all of them should have strong transition arrangements with adult education programs in their service areas. There seems to be no inherent reason why all colleges should not adopt arrangements similar to those exemplified by model programs. Thus far, those models have developed on an ad hoc basis within the context of state policies that support transitions. To achieve the full potential of collaboration for transitions, lessons learned may have to be institutionalized to be taken to scale. This would necessitate both explicit policies requiring stronger transition programs at every college and additional funding. The KCTCS/KYAE transition pilot program, what has reached only three colleges to date, may be a model to build on. But the existing model programs suggest that ongoing special funding for transition coordinators and program development may be required as well. An initial step might be to model support for transitions programs on support for workforce education. Both KCTCS and KYAE support regional workforce education coordinators, and they may wish to consider supporting regional transitions coordinators.

(3) Institutionalizing transitions policy statewide will entail finding answers to a number of difficult questions that have so far been resolved at only a few institutions. Among them are:

- Is KCTCS assessment and placement policy the appropriate foundation for statewide transitions policy? If not, what should be the foundation? If so, should "cut scores" be adjusted statewide, and how?

- Are adult education programs able to provide adequate lower level developmental education instruction? If not, should their capacities be upgraded?

- What exactly should be the goals of adult/developmental programs? Should they be to prepare students for developmental education, for credit courses, to raise scores on the COMPASS test (and if so, to what score), to pass the GED examination (again, at what score), to attain a certain score on the TABE assessment, or some combination of these goals?

- What curricular changes are required in adult education programs to facilitate transitions? What skills beyond those required to pass the GED should be taught and at what level? Should college readiness curricula be developed and disseminated?

- Who should pay for adult education transition programs? Should they be free to students in all cases? When should students pay developmental education tuition? When and how should "dual enrollment" be used to facilitate transitions? What should be the financial obligations of KYAE, KCTCS, and of local providers and colleges?

(4) In a similar fashion, a strong case also can be made that lessons learned from model workforce programs should be taken to scale. Policy incentives, staff training, and seed money to develop strong and sustainable programs in more areas may be required. It appears that in many areas the full potential for partnerships with the local business community as well as specialized services, such as the Kentucky Employability Certificate, have not been fully realized. In this regard, the state may wish to consider the problems some local program managers perceive in applying for special funding programs for workforce education, such as the Workforce Alliance.

(5) In addition, state leaders may wish to reexamine the existing division of labor between colleges and adult education programs in the workforce area. While it is not clear that present arrangements are inadequate, many adult educators believe that they can and should provide more fully contextualized service than they do presently. In fact, the limits of existing adult education workforce programs may limit the investments of some program managers in this field. Setting the bar higher in terms of what they are expected to achieve, together with additional funding to achieve it, may result in a stronger commitment at the local level and improved service. In any event, this possibility bears examination.

(6) The constantly escalating enrollment goals of KYAE, and the practice of counting all enrollments as having equal value for meeting those goals, are a cause of concern to many, but not all, local program managers. The aims of this policy are clearly admirable, and its accomplishments have been impressive. But, it is in some ways a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it encourages local programs to develop short-duration, cost-effective service models in both traditional adult education and workforce service. On the other hand, it limits the ability of programs to provide more

expensive high-intensity and long-duration programs that some students may require. Of particular concern to local managers is the practice of effectively treating all enrollments as equal for the purpose of achieving enrollment goals. It may be that special funds for priority areas of managers instruction should be considered, or a system of weighting enrollments. Based on interviews for this research, it appears that a full and frank dialogue between KYAE and local managers about the nature and extent of problems arising from the enrollment goals, ways to address them, and whether there is need for policy changes, would be beneficial to both. In this regard, it is important that Kentucky has invested in a new federal study of adult functional literacy due to be completed in 2005. The investment will produce state and county data on the need for service that may be of great value in examining both statewide and local goals.

(7) The large number of local programs (120) in Kentucky is striking to an outside observer, particularly because some programs are quite small. Although the very small size of some local programs may limit their potential, in some parts of the state this issue appears to have been well addressed by regional collaborative arrangements that achieve economies of scale. KYAE may wish to examine whether more arrangements of this sort would be beneficial.

(8) Although Kentucky does not have a large non-English speaking population at present, policy makers are aware that the state will be more strongly affected by future demographic shifts, and that they must begin to prepare for this now. Some large urban programs have begun to develop specialized high intensity instructional and transition programs for ESL students. Support for these programs and for statewide forward planning to provide high quality service to a larger language minority population are already priorities, and they should continue to be so. Kentucky has the opportunity to benefit from the experience of other states in ESL service.

(9) Both KYAE and KCTCS have launched numerous special initiatives, both large and small. Careful evaluation of the effectiveness of these initiatives and adjustments in policy and funding (if required) would be beneficial. The Kentucky Virtual Adult Education program is already under review. Other initiatives such as the transition pilot grant program and the TANF Work and Learn program might teach valuable lessons.

(10) The Kentucky experience poses at least two issues for national policy:

- Because of its emphasis on short-duration service, as well as on workforce education and transitions, the scope and accomplishments of Kentucky's adult education system are not captured very well by the federal National Reporting System (NRS) or by other data sets. The federal government uses these instruments both to increase understanding of adult education and to allocate resources. Federal officials should consider improving the NRS to record the achievements of Kentucky and other states that are expanding traditional adult education services and practices in beneficial ways.

- Although Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (which authorizes the federal role in adult education) stipulates that both transitions from adult education to postsecondary education, and workforce education should be priorities, the federal government has established neither explicit policies nor funding streams to support either service. The Kentucky experience indicates that both special policies and targeted funding are required to bring these services

to scale. So far, the U.S. Department of Education's interest in transitions has been almost exclusively targeted on transitions from high school to college. Greater emphasis should be placed on transitions from adult education. Recently, federal officials have floated the idea of using at least some Perkins Act vocational education funds to stimulate transitions from high school to college. Using these or other special funds to support transitions from adult education to college should also be considered.

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Kentucky provides an ideal venue for understanding both the actual and the potential relationship between adult education and community colleges. Colleges play a large and increasingly important role in the state's adult education system. They do so not only as providers of adult education, but through partnerships with other providers that take many different forms.

The richness of interaction between colleges and adult education in Kentucky has been stimulated by rapid and fairly recent changes in state policies affecting both. Opportunities created by those policies and the rapid pace of change have resulted in a wide array of service patterns within colleges and adult education systems, as well as a wide range of linkages between the two systems. As a result, the state can be viewed as an experimental laboratory for linkages between the two systems, as well as for the potential of public policy to strengthen those linkages.

Kentucky's community college and adult education systems are managed by separate agencies, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) and Kentucky Adult Education (KYAE). Compared to most other states, these two systems enjoy unusually high status within the state's educational governance structure. Both operate under the aegis of the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), which also oversees the state's four-year colleges and universities. Both have received new legislative charters in recent years. Community and technical colleges were legislatively rechartered in 1997; adult education received a new charter in 2000.

In both cases, the systems were mandated to greatly increase both the amount and types of services they provided, and the mandates were accompanied by increases in state funding. Moreover, in both cases, legislative mandates required colleges and the adult education system to collaborate on a number of fronts. In Kentucky, therefore, the close relationship between colleges and adult education is no accident. It is state policy.

New policy mandates for colleges and adult education did not require either system to be rebuilt from scratch. There was much of value in both systems, and both were undergoing change prior to their new charters. But those mandates were issued in an era of rapid growth, experimentation, and change, and they are being implemented by strong leaders in both systems. This process of change is still underway, and probably always will be. College and adult education leaders take a continuous improvement approach to their work.

Although they are still works in progress in some respects, Kentucky's colleges and its adult education system have achieved enormous progress in a very short period of time, at both the state and local levels. Among other things, they have found new ways to work together.

State-level managers have established a number of important enabling policies that promote collaboration. On the whole, however, they have not been highly prescriptive about exactly what form the linkages between the two systems should take. As a result, a variety of different models have developed at the local level. An examination of Kentucky, thus, demonstrates a large variety of options for the contributions adult education and colleges can make to each other. Viewed in this way, Kentucky shows that these contributions are numerous, highly important, and rapidly expanding.

ORGANIZATION OF REPORT

To understand the relationship between community colleges and adult education/literacy in Kentucky, it is first necessary to understand the need for service that has driven both policy change and implementation, as well as the structure and dynamics of KCTCS and KYAE as separate agencies. To that end, this report is divided into two main parts.

Part I contains three sections. Section A (beginning on page 4) explains the need for educational service (including adult education) in Kentucky, and how that need has been interpreted into policy. Section B profiles KCTCS. Section C profiles KYAE.

Part II (beginning on page 36) contains four sections that describe the major forms of linkage between adult education and colleges in Kentucky: (A) provision of adult education service by colleges; (B) transitions from adult education to postsecondary education; (C) partnerships between colleges and adult education programs; and (D) workforce education.

Presented on page i, at the beginning of this report, is a summary of key findings, issues, and recommendations that Kentucky, other states, and the federal government may wish to consider.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

This report is based on research conducted between October 2003 and February 2004. The research consisted of examining documentary evidence and conducting personal interviews (see Appendix for a list of persons interviewed). Both KCTCS and KYAE staff provided extensive documentation and conducted specialized analyses upon request. In addition, the Web sites of both agencies are a rich source of data. The author conducted personal and telephone interviews with both the chancellor of KCTCS and the vice president for adult education, as well as with numerous state level staff members in these and other agencies. In addition, the author conducted site visits to three KCTCS colleges, and met with the adult education staff of most of the other colleges that provide adult education in a four-hour symposium sponsored by KCTCS. The author also interviewed staff involved with adult education at two other colleges via conference calls. In these local level contacts, the author had the opportunity to interview staff of programs not managed by colleges, as well as those that are. Finally, five colleges responded to a detailed questionnaire about their institutions and the relationship of those institutions to adult education.

I: BACKGROUND FOR CHANGE AND THE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTIONS

A. NEED FOR SERVICE AND POLICY RESPONSE

(1) Economic Challenges

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, Kentucky was a state in economic jeopardy. State policy makers acknowledged this, and responded with a large number of initiatives. A major component of the state's response consisted of improvements in its education system – including adult education.

In many respects, Kentucky in the 1980s and 1990s was the prototype of an "old economy" state. In terms of both sales and employment, the largest sectors of its economy were traditional manufacturing, warehousing and related transportation, construction, health care, utilities, and the service sector. Coal mining and agriculture were important sources of employment in some parts of the state.[1]

In the 1980s and 1990s, Kentucky suffered the same fate as many other old economy states. Although the total growth of its economy (state domestic product) and employment kept pace with the national average, core industries stagnated. From 1990 to 1997, for example, output of the state's largest economic sector – manufacturing – grew by only 14 percent, compared to overall economic growth of more than 40 percent for the state as a whole. Moreover, there was a decline in total employment in manufacturing and construction (which together comprise almost 30 percent of jobs). Total economic output and employment in agriculture and coal mining declined, dealing serious blows to the regions where these industries are concentrated. Kentucky missed most, but not all, of the knowledge industry boom of the 1990s. By far the largest growth in both sales and employment occurred in the low-wage areas of the service sector.

[1] Data for this section are drawn from 1980, 1990, and 2000 census reports, as well as reports of the 1998 Economic Census. Additional interpretive information was drawn from: "Adult Education and Literacy In Kentucky," Research Report No. 296 of the Legislative Research Commission (Frankfort, KY: August 2000), prepared by Aims C. McGuinness of The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

The results were rates of unemployment and poverty that far exceeded national averages, and levels of median household income well below national averages. There were limited prospects for high paying jobs. The state's population barely grew at all in the 1980s, while the nation's population grew by almost 10 percent. And Kentucky's population grew by only 9.8 percent – to four million people – in the 1990s, compared to national population growth of 13 percent. The average age of the population increased. Many young Kentuckians were leaving the state for economic opportunities elsewhere. An estimated 300,000 workers left the state between 1995 and 2000, and approximately 100,000 Kentuckians worked outside the state. Workers in search of economic opportunity did not have to go far. One of Kentucky's competitive disadvantages is the proximity of large urban areas in other states – such as Cincinnati, Evansville, St. Louis, and Nashville – to which both companies and workers could migrate.

(2) <u>Educational Challenges</u>

In diagnosing Kentucky's economic woes, state policy makers concluded that one of the state's greatest problems was an undereducated workforce. Research on future possibilities for economic growth indicated that most new and existing jobs would require higher levels of education and basic skills.

As in many old economy states, education had not been highly valued by a great many Kentuckians. As a result, the educational statistics were distressing. In 2000, Kentucky was 49th in the nation in the number of adults without a high school diploma or GED, and 42nd in the nation in terms of college graduates. A special survey of adult education, the *Kentucky Adult Literacy Survey* (KALS, 1997), showed that almost one million working age adults (16-65 years of age) – or about 40 percent of the workforce – scored at the two lowest levels of functional literacy. The KALS survey was adapted from the instrument used for the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) in 1992, permitting comparisons with other states. Based on these comparisons, the percentage of Kentucky's workforce scoring at the two lowest levels of functional literacy was near the national average. However, the functional literacy levels of Kentucky's nearby "competitor" states were higher, and

some parts of the state (particularly the mountainous eastern counties, and some areas of the western part of the state) registered distressingly low levels on the KALS scale.[2]

Educational and income levels of African Americans (who comprise almost 10 percent of the state's population) were far below those of other Kentuckians. The state has only a small foreign-born population – about 80,000 – 70 percent of whom are Hispanic. Education and income among the Hispanic population also was well below the state's average.[3]

(3) <u>Policy Response</u>

Improving education levels became a major element in the strategy of Kentucky's state policy makers to revive the state's economy. A more highly educated workforce became a primary policy goal. In the late 1990s, Kentucky adopted reform measures targeted at all aspects of its educational system. Although led by a Democratic governor, most aspects of this educational reform effort were bipartisan.

Reform of the state's community and technical college system as well as its adult education system were part of this overall education strategy. In both cases the goal was clear: to train and retrain as many Kentuckians as possible to meet the basic and applied skills needs of existing employers, and to attract new companies to the state.

It is important to recognize the economic development emphasis of education reform in Kentucky. Education can serve many purposes. In Kentucky, the educational reforms of the late 1990s were targeted squarely on the goal of building a more highly skilled workforce, which is stated explicitly in all of the major reform legislation. For example, the 1997 Kentucky Postsecondary Education Reform Act (which included community college reform) is titled "An Act Relating to Postsecondary Education and Declaring an Emergency." The key legislative "findings" in the Act were:

[2] KYAE fact sheet "About Adult Education" on KYAE Web site.
[3] 1990 and 2000 census reports.

- “The general welfare and material well-being of citizens of the Commonwealth depend in large measure upon the development of a well-educated and highly trained workforce.
- “The education and training of the current and future workforce of the Commonwealth can provide its businesses and industries with the competitive edge critical to their success in the global economy and must be improved to provide its citizens the opportunity to achieve a standard of living in excess of the national average.”

In short, Kentucky’s approach to education reform was driven by a sense of urgency. To turn the state’s economy around, Kentucky had to achieve as much as possible on the educational front as quickly as it could. These facts explain many of the directions taken by both colleges and adult education in the state.

B. THE KENTUCKY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

(1) History and Policy Structure

The Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) was created by the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Act of 1997 (commonly referred to as House Bill-1). The Act established a new umbrella agency, the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), to coordinate all of the state's higher education efforts. The Council was vested with oversight responsibilities for the state's publicly supported colleges and universities. KCTCS was created to assume governance of community and technical colleges, and it was accorded an equal status to other postsecondary institutions within CPE.

Prior to 1997, Kentucky had 13 community and 15 technical colleges of various sizes, and with differing patterns of service and levels of quality. Community colleges were under the governance of the University of Kentucky.[4] Technical colleges were governed, together with secondary vocational programs, by a department of the state's Cabinet for Workforce Development. HB-1 consolidated the governance of community and technical colleges under KCTCS (with the exception of Lexington Community College, which remained under the governance of the University of Kentucky). The legislatively mandated purposes of the new institution were to provide:

- A general two-year academic curriculum with credits transferable to two-year and four-year institutions;
- Technical and semiprofessional programs of two years or less (within a two-year college curriculum, courses in general education, including adult education, not necessarily intended for transfer nor technically oriented); and
- Services to Kentucky's employers and the general public to provide continuing education and customized training for improving the knowledge and skills of Kentucky workers and citizens in all regions of the state.

[4] KCTCS Web site.

The legislation also stated nine specific goals for KCTCS, and established a system of accountability. The first stated goal was to "increase the basic academic and literacy skills of adults through adult basic education and remedial education services."

(2) Goals and Achievements

By its charter, KCTCS was mandated not only to pursue traditional community college goals, but to emphasize adult education and developmental education as well as customized training for industry. The agency was further mandated to establish specific, measurable goals for improving service in all areas of responsibility. Among the major goals KCTCS has pursued are:

- Consolidating and expanding the technical and community colleges to achieve economies of scale and providing statewide service by a system of comprehensive community colleges;
- Increasing enrollments and success rates in all of its services;
- Expanding and improving the offerings of its institutions;
- Forming close partnerships and other working relationships with other educational systems, among them adult education.

Under strong leadership, KCTCS has been outstandingly successful in pursuing these goals. Among its major achievements between 1998 and 2002:[5]

- Increased credit enrollments by almost 50 percent to nearly 68,000 – making its enrollment roughly 75 percent as large as the total undergraduate enrollment of Kentucky's four year colleges and universities;
- Consolidated the community and technical colleges into 16 districts that provide comprehensive service, and make good progress toward accreditation of these districts as comprehensive institutions;
- Expanded the number of campuses – there are now 62 open or under construction – to improve access and statewide service;
- Established 700 new academic, technical, and customized training programs; and

[5] KCTCS Web site.

- Served approximately 180,000 Kentuckians per year through "other programs" including workforce training, continuing education, and adult education.

(3) Special Features

KCTCS has made astounding progress very quickly. Several features of the system are notable:

(a) Workforce education. KCTCS institutions serve almost three times as many Kentuckians by various forms of workforce education, continuing education, and adult education as they serve by their credit offerings. Roughly half of the 180,000 Kentuckians who benefit from these "other programs" are served by various forms of workforce education – usually delivered on-site at companies. And a large percentage of the 700 new offerings developed since 1998 are upgrade training and certification programs available to incumbent workers. Most are supported by contracts with individual companies or various state grant programs. Both individual colleges and the KCTCS central office aggressively seek workforce training opportunities. Most college community and economic development offices emphasize this function, and the state's central office employs a nine-member workforce education field staff.[6]

Many workforce offerings are short courses customized to the special needs of particular employers. Others are training for recognized occupational and vocational skill certificates. Still others involve the design of "turnkey" training programs for companies. Individual colleges differ in the type and extent of workplace education they provide. But, consistent with the economic development imperatives that gave birth to KCTCS, workplace education is a high priority for all colleges.

(b) Remedial education. A second notable feature of KCTCS institutions is the importance they place on helping underprepared students gain access to college. As will be discussed below, this includes provision of traditional adult education services by some colleges. Equally important, most KCTCS institutions have large developmental education programs – and the success rate of developmental education is high. In 2002, 36,079 students were enrolled in developmental programs. This constitutes about 52 percent of KCTCS's total academic enrollment – a percentage

[6] Interview with Donna Davis of KCTCS staff, October 2003, and materials supplied by her and other staff members.

that approximates the national norm for developmental enrollments. About half of KCTCS developmental students were also enrolled in at least one credit course. Of the total developmental enrollment, more than 50 percent enrolled in at least one credit course in the next 12 months, although these success rates vary significantly among institutions.[7]

(c) Special services. The variety of special services KCTCS provides is another notable feature. Under a contract with the state, KCTCS institutions provide the Commonwealth's fire and rescue training, serving 79,000 fire and rescue workers from 1,200 agencies in 2002-2003. Under a $5.5 million contract from the Department of Corrections, KCTCS provided adult and vocational services to an estimated 3,000 inmates in the state's 12 prisons in 2001-2002, resulting in more than 1,100 inmates receiving technical certificates or diplomas and 378 earning GEDs.[8]

(d) Dual enrollment. A fourth notable feature – which often confuses understanding of KCTCS statistics – is the KCTCS's policy of dual enrollment. This arrangement is primarily intended to increase college enrollment of high school students by enriching high school curricula. Most dual enrollments are high school students enrolled in at least one community college course. Many, but not all, of the courses offered count toward college credit. No tuition is charged for most dual enrollment courses, although the cost to colleges of faculty time and overhead can be substantial. Recently, some colleges have developed dual enrollment programs for adult education students as well, although the number participating at most colleges is still small. In 2002-2003, KCTCS institutions served approximately 11,000 dual-enrollment students. This program is one of several types of partnerships KCTCS has formed with high schools and the adult education system.[9]

(e) Special initiatives. Finally, KCTCS has launched, or participated in, a large number of special initiatives to expand service. One of particular interest is the Ready-to-Work (RTW) Program. This program was developed through a collaboration between KCTCS and the state's Cabinet for Health and Family Services. RTW provides targeted case management and work-study opportunities for

[7] Special analysis prepared for this report by Linda Morefield of KCTCS staff in January 2004. For comparisons with other states, see the "State Comparisons" section of the Web site of the National Center for Research in Higher Education. Also see: Robert H. McCabe, *Yes We Can: A Community College Guide for Developing America's Unprepared*, a joint publication of the League for Innovation in the Community College and the American Association of Community Colleges, 2003.
[8] KCTCS Web site and information provided by Keith Stephens of KCTCS staff, November 2003.
[9] Information provided by Shauna King-Simms and Keith Stephens of KCTCS staff in October, November 2003.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participants enrolled in KCTCS institutions. The work requirement of TANF is satisfied by TANF and federally funded work-study placements. In addition, the program provides extensive counseling and other support services to TANF participants. Effectively, this program establishes a special source of funding (TANF) to enhance the educational opportunities of this special needs population. In 2003, approximately 1,600 TANF students took part in the program statewide, at a total cost of about $2.5 million.[10]

In 2003, the RTW program was expanded on a pilot basis to include slots for up to 50 adult education students in five counties. The pilot has been named Work And Learn (WAL). Participating adult education students receive the benefits of both the work study and supportive services components of the program. In addition, WAL has a strong emphasis on preparing adult education students for transitions to postsecondary education. Participants must have postsecondary education as their goal, and only students for whom this is considered a realistic goal are selected. In 2004, WAL was expanded. As initiatives in welfare reform, postsecondary, and adult education, RTW and WAL are national models that deserve far more attention than can be given in this report.

(f) Service. In short, KCTCS is a comprehensive community college system that meets a wide range of educational needs. In terms of head counts, it is more dedicated to providing specialized services to business, public institutions, and individuals than it is to preparing students for two-year degrees, certificates, and college transfer through credit-bearing programs.

Unlike community colleges in some states, the primary function of KCTCS institutions is not transfer to four-year institutions. In fact, in its 2002-2003 accountability report to the state legislature, CPE cited low rates of transfer to four-year institutions as a problem, and proposed measures to remedy it. KCTCS institutions do not neglect academic programs, however. In 2002-2003, they granted approximately 10,000 certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees – roughly a 1:7 ratio to students enrolled in credit programs, and consistent with national norms for community

[10] Information provided by Shauna King-Simms in October 2003.

college program completion. The year-to-year retention rate of first-time freshmen was approximately 55 percent – above national norms.[11]

(g) Finances. The finances of KCTCS reflect its service patterns, as well as peculiarities of community college financing in Kentucky. In 2001-2002, KCTCS and its constituent institutions received about $450 million in funding. Approximately half of this funding came from state appropriations; 10 percent came from tuition and fees. Thirty-five percent came from grants and contracts – largely the specialized services to business and public institutions noted above. Although some state appropriation funds may be used to underwrite these specialized services, most services to business and the public sector are expected to be self-supporting and, in fact, may turn a profit.[12]

Unlike many other states, Kentucky's community colleges receive very little support from local government. This is due primarily to the history and governance of the colleges. Prior to 1998, all community colleges in the state were created by the University of Kentucky (UK) Board of Trustees in response to requests from local community groups (usually local foundations created to raise money to purchase property) or by changing former off-campus sites of the University into UK community colleges. Prior to the creation of KCTCS, community colleges had local advisory boards. Today they have boards of directors, with limited authority, appointed by the governor. Since 1998, the creation of new community/technical colleges has been under the jurisdiction of the KCTCS Board of Regents, with legislative approval. Because local government has not played a large role in the establishment of community colleges in Kentucky, the colleges have always received almost all of their funding from state appropriations, grants, and contracts.[13]

Although tuition provides only a small part of KCTCS funding, at an average rate of about $1,650, KCTCS's tuition is the 24th highest among the states. However, because of the state's system of financial supports, KCTCS scores fairly high on the "affordability" index developed by the National Center for Research in Higher Education.[14]

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[11] Report to the Legislature on KCTCS Web site. For national comparisons, see the "State Comparisons" section of the Web site of the National Center for Research in Higher Education.
[12] Financial information provided by Keith Stephens and Terri Scales of KCTCS staff, November-December 2003.
[13] Communication from Tim Burcham, Vice President and Executive Director, KCTCS Foundation, Inc., May 3, 2004.
[14] National Center for Research on Higher Education comparative figures on their Web site.

Because KCTCS institutions are largely dependant on state funding, it is important to understand how KCTCS does *not* support its colleges. In particular, colleges are not reimbursed by FTE enrollment formulas, as they are in many other states. Rather, funds are distributed through a complex baseline funding system. Each college receives the amount it got in the prior year, plus percentage increments (if funding is available) and increments for providing priority services. Although there are many incentives to increase enrollment, head counts do not by themselves drive college funding. Rather, the state's approach is to build enrollment, scope, and quality of service by adequate and appropriate funding.[15]

The financing of KCTCS demonstrates the cost-effectiveness for which community colleges are renowned. Although the System serves 75 percent as many students in its credit programs as the state's four-year colleges and universities enroll as undergraduates, and although it serves many more Kentuckians in total, state funding for KCTCS is only about 20 percent of the funding for four-year colleges and universities.[16]

[15] Interview with Dr. Tony Newberry, President, Jefferson Community College District, January 20, 2004.
[16] CPE 2002-2003 Report on CPE Web site.

C. KENTUCKY ADULT EDUCATION

Kentucky Adult Education (KYAE) is a dynamic agency that has accomplished a remarkable amount in the last few years. Among its notable features are the diversity of services it provides and the many ways it provides them – often in partnership with other agencies. As a result, KYAE defies many of the standard categories for analyzing adult education, and the full extent of its accomplishments can only be understood by careful scrutiny of the distinctive approach it has crafted.

(1) Policy Structure

In name, KYAE is a very recent creation. Prior to late 2003, the agency was dubbed the Department for Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL), headed by a commissioner, and located in the state's Cabinet for Workforce Development. In late 2003, it was transferred to CPE, and renamed KYAE. Its director is now a vice president of CPE.[17]

While this change in governance was important, a far more important change occurred with the legislative rechartering of adult education in April, 2000. Prior to that time, Kentucky had an innovative and fairly well-funded adult education system. Among its distinguishing features was a strong emphasis on family literacy, the use of technology, and workforce education, as well as its unusually strong commitment to statewide service.

Adult education services, including family literacy, were (and are) provided in each of the state's 120 counties, and those services were (and are) funded by contracts to each of the 120 counties.

Like all state adult education systems, however, Kentucky's system fell far short of meeting the need for service. Of the estimated one million adults with low levels of functional literacy, only 5 percent were being served in 2000, although the numbers had been increasing in recent years.[18]

[17] The history of KYAE is found in the "AE Fact Sheet" on KYAE's Web site.
[18] Ibid.

The instrument for rechartering adult education in Kentucky was legislation commonly referred to as Senate Bill 1. This legislation grew out of the same concerns and imperatives to foster economic development by upgrading education that created HB-1, which chartered KCTCS. In fact, most of the important provisions of Senate Bill 1 are its amendments to HB-1. Those provisions formally incorporate adult education into the framework of postsecondary reform. In this way, Senate Bill 1 recognizes adult education as a postsecondary service with a mission comparable in goals and importance to that of colleges and universities, rather than as a school-based remedial system. One finding of the legislation was that: "Adult illiteracy is a fundamental barrier to every major challenge facing Kentucky, including early childhood education, education reform, economic development, and improving the health and well-being of Kentucky's families and communities." [19]

(2) <u>Mandates</u>

But Senate Bill 1 was much more than a call to arms. It issued a number of mandates to CPE. These mandates:

- Required CPE to work with DAEL (as it was then known) to establish a 20-year plan for meeting the state's adult education needs as well as an accountability system to insure that the plan is implemented;
- Created a special adult education trust fund within CPE that would provide additional revenues for adult education;
- Stipulated that funding priority should be given to serving those adults and regions of the state most in need;
- Urged adult education agencies to coordinate with any and all other agencies concerned with economic development;
- Expanded the mission of adult education to include "functionally contexted workplace basic skills training based on employers' needs…including proficiency in critical thinking, computing, reading, writing, problem solving, team-building, and use of technology at various worksites regarding basic skills;"

[19] The full text of Senate Bill 1, from which the following extracts are drawn, is found on the Kentucky State Government Archives Web site. A link to this resource is available on the KYAE Web site.

- Established a variety of incentive programs to encourage employers to support workplace basic skills education; and
- Formally incorporated family literacy into the mission of the new adult education agency.

(3) Action Agenda

Pursuant to the requirement for a 20-year plan, CPE approved an "Action Agenda" for adult education in November 2000. That Agenda is a cornerstone of state policy. In addition to recommending $7 million as the initial allocation to the new adult education Trust Fund, it set specific targets for increasing the number of Kentuckians served over the next 10 years. The targets are stated relative to the one million adults estimated to need help in improving basic skills. They set the goal of increasing the numbers served from 5 percent of those needing help (50,000 learners) in 2000 to 30 percent of the target population (300,000 people) in 2010. The target established for 2003-2004 is 100,000 people.[20]

In addition, the Action Agenda states that these goals can only be achieved by a partnership of government, business, educators at all levels, and other organizations. It poses "Five Critical Questions" to guide the partners. These questions and the service targets have in large measure set the operational goals and measures of accountability for KYAE. The questions are: [21]

- Are more Kentuckians participating in adult education programs?
- Are those adult learners meeting their educational goals?
- Are more adult learners advancing to postsecondary education?
- Are more adult learners being prepared for the continually changing workplace?
- Are Kentucky's communities and economy benefiting?

[20] "AE Fact Sheet" on KYAE's Web site.
[21] Ibid. These questions are extensively used by KYAE to describe and guide its work.

(4) The Effects of Policy

It is evident that adult education in Kentucky is governed by a fairly detailed policy structure established by law. This policy structure defines many of the most important features of adult education service in the state. Among these are:

- Adult education services in Kentucky consist of more than the traditional "adult literacy" services of adult basic education, adult secondary education (GED preparation), and English as a second language. They also include instruction in an array of workforce basic skills, assessment services, corrections education, and family literacy.
- These services are available in all parts of the state where there is a need for them.
- Funding for adult education is distributed according to need for service.
- A high priority is placed on the role of adult education in promoting economic development and employability, and specifically on workforce basic skills services that meet the needs of employers and employees.
- Ambitious goals for increasing the numbers of students who are enrolled and who meet their learning goals are among the major forces driving the adult education system.
- Increasing the number of adult learners who make transitions to postsecondary education is an explicit policy goal.
- Forging partnerships with other agencies, including KCTCS, is a major tool for achieving adult education goals.

These characteristics of adult education service are not discretionary. They are required by state policy. KYAE has taken these policy prescriptions seriously and implemented them as literally as possible. Considering other work by CAAL that is completed or in process, this means that adult education service in Kentucky differs from that in many other states in some important respects:

- Adult education supported by KYAE encompasses a far wider range of skills and services.
- Both workforce education and family literacy have a much higher priority.
- Collaborations with other agencies are probably more robust.

- Promoting transitions to postsecondary education is mandated and is, thus, a more prominent goal.
- The emphasis placed on rapidly increasing both enrollments and achievement of student learning gains is exceptionally great.
- KYAE received $19 million of additional funding in the initial biennium to achieve its goals.

(5) Patterns of Service

Because of the special characteristics of adult education in Kentucky just cited, the services provided by KYAE are not easily described by the standard reporting categories used to profile most states. A comprehensive description of those services is beyond the scope of this report.

To provide an overview that approximates the richness of service patterns, the work of KYAE will be divided into two categories. The first category will be called "traditional adult education services." These services are identified as "adult education" by Title II of the federal Workforce Investment Act: adult basic education (ABE), English as a second language (ESL), and adult secondary education (ASE or GED preparation). The second category will be called "workforce education" services.

As will become apparent, this distinction is somewhat arbitrary in a number of respects. It also neglects the approximately 4,000 adults enrolled in family literacy programs and the more than 6,000 Kentuckians enrolled in correctional education programs, which are beyond the scope of this report. Moreover, it does not fully explore ESL service, because this is such a small portion of the need for service and of the service provided in Kentucky, relative to other states. The demand for ESL is growing, however, and deserves a separate in-depth review.

(6) Traditional Adult Education Service

(a) Overall numbers. In 2002-2003, Kentucky Adult Education exceeded its goal of serving 90,000 adults with a combination of traditional and workforce services. According to KYAE, approximately 57,000 of the students served in that year received traditional adult education

services.[22] Kentucky's report to the federal government, under the provisions of the National Reporting System (NRS), indicates, however, that only 34,700 students were served by traditional services for 12+ hours. The balance, about 22,000 students, received less than 12 hours of instruction. As will become apparent, this information is misleading. But Kentucky's NRS Report is a good place to begin to gain an understanding of traditional services. A summary of selected NRS figures is included in the table on page 21.

(b) Types of service. As the table indicates, 20,839 students (60 percent of the total) were enrolled in ABE classes, 10,401 (30 percent) were enrolled in ASE/GED classes, and 3,451 (about 10 percent) were enrolled in ESL classes. The relative portion of ABE and ASE/GED enrollments differs greatly among states, but Kentucky's distribution is similar to states such as Iowa and Oregon, if the larger ESL populations in those states are factored out.[23]

[22] Ibid. This number is established by adding the number of students listed as receiving ABE, ASE, and ESL services listed in the "Adult Education Facts" section of KYAE's Web site. Also communications from Robert Curry and Reecie Stagnolia of KYAE staff in November 2004.

[23] See *Adult Education and Community Colleges in Five States*, a report prepared for CAAL by CASAS and published by CAAL in September 2003 (available on CAAL's Web site).

Kentucky Adult Education Enrollments and Educational Gains, FY 2002-2003

Entering Educational Functioning Level	Total Number Enrolled	Number Completed Level	Number Completed Level and Advanced One or More Levels	Number Separated Before Completion	Number Remaining Within Level	Percentage Completing Level
1- ABE Beginning Literacy	1,189	505	485	401	283	42%
2- ABE Beginning Basic Education	3,840	1,952	1,935	1,375	513	51%
3- ABE Intermediate Low	6,860	4,072	3,854	1,975	813	59%
4- ABE Intermediate High	8,950	6,307	6,208	1,964	679	70%
5- ASE Low	5,398	4,629	4,629	530	239	86%
6- ASE High	5,012	3,947	0 N/A	367	698	79%
7- ESL Beginning Literacy	936	529	449	294	113	57%
8- ESL Beginning	1,009	451	374	323	235	45%
9- ESL Intermediate Low	508	299	221	168	41	59%
10- ESL Intermediate High	430	240	209	117	73	56%
11- ESL Low Advanced	327	151	136	109	67	45%
12- ESL High Advanced	241	119	0	78	44	49%
TOTALS	34,700	23,201	18,500	7,701	3,798	67%

Source: This table is based on Table 4 of KYAE's 2002-2003 NRS report, provided by Terry L. Tackett of the KYAE staff. In interpreting the "ASE High" figures, readers should be aware that passing the GED examination is the definition of completion of ASE in Kentucky. ABE figures are based on assessments using the TABE. Local programs may choose among several ESL assessment instruments. Programs are required to retest students on a regular basis, and scores are recorded in a statewide unit record database.

The small percentage of ESL students reflects the fact that Kentucky has a much smaller foreign-born population than do many other states. However, the level of service exceeds the percentage of foreign born. Only 2 percent of Kentuckians are foreign born, whereas 9 percent of enrollments in KYAE traditional programs are in ESL programs. This disproportionate service is even more striking, because less than 1 percent of Kentuckians reported that they "do *not* speak English well" or "very well" according to the 2000 census. If this census number is taken as a measure of need for service, Kentucky may be one of the few states that is coming close to meeting the need for ESL service for speaking English (as opposed to reading and writing) – in terms of enrollments at least.

African Americans make up 10 percent of Kentucky's population. About 14 percent of enrollments in traditional programs consist of this racial group, according to the NRS report. African Americans were more likely than whites to be enrolled in ABE (as opposed to GED or ESL) programs (82 percent vs. 64 percent).[24]

The distribution of students within types of traditional service is typical of that found in other states. Kentucky uses the TABE test to assess ABE students. By this measure, most ABE students were at the higher functioning levels. ESL students are assessed by a variety of tests, primarily the BEST. By these measures, most ESL students were at the lower functioning levels. GED students were about equally divided among ASE, ASE High, and ASE Low, although this distinction is not recognized in most Kentucky programs. Most providers serve all GED students by a single program.

(c) <u>Performance.</u> The percentage of students completing an NRS level was high (78 percent) compared to many states. If completion of a level is used as a measure of retention in programs, Kentucky also achieved a high retention rate compared to other states.[25] In Kentucky, the percentage completing a level is measured by post test scores for ABE and ESL, and by passing the GED test for ASE students. As in most states, these success rates varied by level. They also vary among local programs. Moreover, as in most states, the highest success rates were where the highest

[24] U.S. census data for 2000. Table 1 of KYAE's 2002-2003 NRS Report.
[25] For comparisons, see: *Adult Education and Community Colleges in Five States: A Report from the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)*, 2003. Available on CAAL's Web site at www.caalusa.org.

concentration of learners are, at the upper levels of ABE and the lower levels of ESL. Completion rates of ASE students were also impressive. Seventy-nine percent of students assessed as ASE High received their GEDs (5,012 students). Approximately 9,452 Kentuckians passed the GED tests in 2002-2003.[26]

Average hours of instruction for all traditional services were approximately 50 hours. The number of hours were significantly higher than this average for lower levels of ABE, and significantly lower for most levels of ESL. GED students received about 35 hours of instruction on average.[27]

Measured by its NRS report, therefore, Kentucky provides highly effective traditional adult education service.

(d) Emphasis on short-term services. It might be assumed that most of the approximately 22,000 traditional adult education students that were served by Kentucky's programs for less than 12 hours in 2002-2003 are drop-outs – students who enrolled but did not remain in the program for very long, and who achieved no educational gain. While this is true for some of these students, it is not universally the case.

Interviews with KYAE state staff and local program managers indicated that many adult education programs in Kentucky emphasize short-term interventions (fewer than 12 hours) and individualized learning plans to assist students in attaining their educational goals. Among these are short courses in test-taking skills, "brush up" programs to help students who have been out of school to prepare for the GED, and individualized instruction in specific skills to help students who test only slightly below the levels needed to pass one or more parts of the examination.

Program managers interviewed take pride in these short, targeted interventions that can bring large results in terms of students passing high-stakes tests. In addition, short-term interventions

[26] Based on analysis of Table 4 of KYAE's 2002-2003 NRS Report and Kentucky's 2002-2003 Annual Report to the U.S. Department of Education. Number of students passing GED test in 2002-2003 supplied by Jacqueline Korengel of KYAE, April 6, 2003.
[27] Based on Table 4 of KYAE's 2002-2003 NRS Report.

can take the form of time spent in a learning laboratory, or various distance learning options (discussed below).

As a result, the number of adult education students who received instruction from KYAE-funded programs exceeds those listed on the NRS report. And the total number of students who received some educational gain is probably closer to the 57,000 number referenced above than to the 34,000 reported to NRS.

(e) Student-centered instruction. Short-term interventions are part of a larger pattern of service in Kentucky's adult education system. Both state officials and local program managers reported that adult education "courses," in the usual sense of the term, are rare. That is, the usual manner of instruction is *not* to offer classes of a certain duration for students at each learning level, or a few learning levels. Most Kentucky programs contacted by this study offer mixed-ability classes in which students with different learning levels pursue individual learning plans at their own pace.

While low-level learners are often taught separately from upper-level students, it is not unusual for classes to include upper level ABE, GED, and even college developmental education students. While mixed-ability classes are more demanding for teachers, and may have other disadvantages, they provide a certain type of "student centered" instruction that emphasizes moving each student as rapidly as possible up the skills continuum. And they provide an environment in which short-duration students can easily "drop in" to achieve their goals.

(f) Effectiveness of traditional services. Taken as a whole, traditional adult education in Kentucky appears to be effective, highly flexible, and student centered. One measure of the system's success is that none of the local program managers interviewed for this study reported waiting lists. Waiting lists are common in most states, particularly for ESL programs. In Kentucky, a combination of ambitious targets for increasing enrollments, and flexible instructional strategies means that virtually all students who request instruction are served. In fact, KYAE has invested approximately $2.2 million in a succession of public awareness campaigns aimed at encouraging people who need adult education service to seek it. Whether because of these campaigns, or because of local efforts

and an increasing awareness of the importance of higher basic skills, total demand for service has continued to grow, and local programs have continued to meet it.

(7) Workforce Education

Workforce education programs provided by KYAE served approximately 43,000 students in 2002-2003.[28] Unlike KCTCS workforce education services, all workforce education provided by KYAE is free to the student – with the exception of nominal charges for some assessments. Because the strong emphasis placed on workforce education is virtually unique to the state, workforce education will be discussed in detail beginning on page 63. In the context of understanding KYAE, it is sufficient at this point to underline the fact that, unlike many state adult education programs, Kentucky's serves almost as many students in workforce education as it does in traditional programs. Moreover, workforce education has been the fastest growing KYAE service. Numbers served have increased by approximately 400 percent since 2000, whereas numbers served in traditional programs have increased by approximately 50 percent over the same period. Thus, workforce education is a large part of the service KYAE provides.[29]

It is important to recognize that most workforce education instruction provided by adult education programs in Kentucky is of very short duration – a few hours of classroom time. In addition, workforce education includes assessing incumbent workers and unemployed persons to determine their skill levels in order to increase their prospects of employment or identify their need for educational services. A significant number of individuals in KYAE programs (about 16,000) are served "by assessment only."

(8) Provider Type and Staffing

(a) Provider type. As noted, Kentucky has a commitment to provide adult education programs in each of its 120 counties. Because many counties have small populations, service is sometimes offered by the same provider in a number of counties. In 2001-2002, KYAE reported that there were

[28] Communication from Robert Curry of KYAE in November 2003.
[29] Ibid. and "AE Fact Sheet" as well as supporting documents on KYAE's Web site.

109 providers. Although precise numbers were not available for 2002-2003 at the time of this study, state level staff indicated that the number was slightly smaller – closer to 100. There seems to be a trend toward consolidation of providers.

Sixty-seven of the providers in 2001-2002 were local Boards of Education, nine were KCTCS institutions providing comprehensive adult education services, twelve were KCTCS institutions providing only corrections education, nine were CBOs, and the balance were local governments, universities, state agencies, and regional cooperatives. In 2003, the number of KCTCS institutions providing comprehensive adult education services had increased to thirteen, the number of CBOs had decreased, and the number of programs involved in regional cooperatives had increased.[30]

(b) Program size. Even with the trend toward consolidation, most adult education programs in Kentucky are fairly small, and the smaller programs tend to be in areas with smaller populations. For example, Adair County (selected as an example because it is first alphabetically), which has a population of about 17,000, served only 308 adult education students in 2002-2003, whereas the program in Jefferson County (Louisville), with a population of 693,000, served 11,970. Both programs are managed by local boards of education.[31]

Kentucky's county profiles indicate that 93,400 students (excluding corrections education students) were served by 120 county programs in 2002-2003. Sixty of the 120 county programs served fewer than 500 students in 2002-2003, with an average enrollment among these programs of 314. Thirty-nine programs served between 500 and 1,000. Twenty-one served more than 1,000. Seven county programs (Calloway, Christian, Daviess, Fayette, Jefferson, Kenton, and Pike) served more than 2,000. The average number served per program (778) is far larger than the size of the median program (494), indicating that students are more likely to be served by larger programs than by smaller ones.

The seven programs with enrollments of more than 2,000 collectively served approximately 29,000 students in 2002-2003, or about 31 percent of all students enrolled, whereas the 60 smallest

[30] Communications from Reecie Stagnolia of KYAE in November 2003, and "AE Fact Sheet."
[31] The conclusions about program size in this and the following paragraph are based on an analysis of "County Profile" data on KYAE's Web site.

programs served some 18,700, about 20 percent of enrollments. Eighty percent of students are, therefore, served by the 50 percent of programs with above-average enrollments.[32]

(c) Staffing levels. Kentucky's 2002-2003 NRS report indicates that (counting both full-time and part-time staff) KYAE employs a state-level central office staff of 30 and that local programs employ 88 administrative/supervisory/ancillary services staff – roughly one supervisor for each provider. The report also indicates that 818 paid instructors were employed by local programs (458 of them full time) plus 7 counselors, 93 paid paraprofessionals, and 190 volunteers. Counting all adult education enrollments reported by Kentucky, this yields a ratio of students to all instructional staff (including volunteers) of approximately 100:1, although the ratio, of course, differs among programs in Kentucky. Counting only the enrollments reported to the federal government by the NRS, the ratio of students to instructional staff is approximately 34:1, which is comparable to states such as California, Iowa, and Oregon.[33] The number of staff in all categories reported by Kentucky to the NRS in 2002-2003 were lower than in 2001-2002.[34]

The number of volunteers reported was surprisingly small compared to most state programs, and it may be underreported. For example, managers of one program indicated that they use about 300 volunteers, and managers of another indicated that they use about 200. Nevertheless, state and local staff interviewed explained that volunteer literacy programs have never established a very firm foothold in Kentucky. At least some local staff said that they would welcome more volunteers to help with low-level learners. Everyone interviewed, however, emphasized the importance of professionalism, reliability, and competence in the teaching staff.

In fact, Kentucky adult educators are proud of the professionalism they believe is found in most programs. KYAE policy requires that all program directors and instructors must have at least a bachelor's degree, and all teachers must take two "orientation" courses on adult education and instructional techniques within the first six months of their employment. Program managers must take a program management "orientation" course; family literacy and workforce education staff

[32] Ibid.
[33] KYAE 2002-2003 NRS Report. For comparisons with other states, see *Adult Education and Community Colleges in Five States*, a report to CAAL for its community college project, available on CAAL's Web site, www.caalusa.org. See also: *Leading from the Middle: The State Role in Adult Education and Literacy*, also available on CAAL's Web site.
[34] Compare KYAE 2001-2002 NRS Report on KYAE's Web site.

must complete additional special coursework. Full-time instructors must participate in at least 18 hours of professional development activities every year, and part-time staff must participate in 6 hours. Reimbursements of $500 for full-time instructors and $250 for part-time instructors are available for these activities.[35]

(d) Professional development. KYAE sponsors a wide range of professional development courses each month on virtually all aspects of adult education. Some are offered locally or regionally, some are statewide, and an increasing number are offered via the Internet. In addition, some of the larger programs sponsor their own training programs, and professional development credit can be earned by attending national conferences or workshops. KYAE also provides support for the Adult Education Academy for Professional Development at Morehead State University. This program trains cohorts of program managers in total quality management. More expansive training is available via the Kentucky Adult Education Literacy Institute (KAELI) – a one-year program offered by several of the state's universities. By 2005, all programs will be required to have at least one KAELI-trained instructor. To coordinate efforts and ensure continuous improvement of staff, KYAE is launching a program of individual professional development plans.[36]

In short, KYAE takes professional development seriously, and supports it in many different ways. The effectiveness of these efforts is beyond the scope of this study.

(9) Funding and Expenditures

(a) State funding. KYAE receives most of its funding from three sources: (1) the state Adult Education Trust Fund administered by CPE and established by Senate Bill 1, (2) a state general fund appropriation earmarked for adult education; and (3) federal grants, principally the state's allocation under Title II of the Workforce Investment Act. In FY 2002-2003, total funding was $32,519,949. Federal funding of approximately $10 million contributed less than one-third to this total. The two state funding sources contributed about $11 million each.

[35] KYAE Policy Manual on KYAE Web site.
[36] KYAE Web site and 2002-2003 report to the U.S. Department of Education.

About 60 percent of KYAE's budget – some $19 million – is distributed as base grants or incentive "rewards" to local programs. Both base grants and "rewards" may be used for workforce education as well as traditional adult education service, and they provide the major source of funding for local programs. Funding for base grants is drawn from all three of KYAE's funding streams.

(b) Local program funding. Local adult education programs in Kentucky are supported almost entirely by funding from KYAE. Local governments rarely provide funds to adult education programs (although they may administer them), just as they rarely invest in community colleges.[37] The agencies that administer local programs often provide some type of in-kind support in the form of overhead services, but the amount of such support varies and is difficult to value. In addition, KYAE and other agencies provide special grant funds for selected purposes. These will be discussed later in this report. Special grant funds are of great importance, but the fact remains that core funding from KYAE provides the lion's share of support for adult education in the state.

Base grants are distributed to counties according to a calculation of the need for service in each county. Essentially, the percentage of each county's population estimated to score at the two lowest levels of the KALS assessment determines the amount of base grant funding received. Counties are also assigned "goals" for enrollment in each year. Consistent with KYAE's commitment to increasing the numbers of Kentuckians served, these goals increase each year.

For purposes of determining whether a program has met its goals, KYAE counts all enrollments as equal – whether they are in core adult education or in workforce education, and regardless of their duration. (Enrollments in corrections education and projects funded by Workforce Alliance grants are not counted in determining whether a program has met its enrollment goals.) For these purposes, "assessment only" enrollments are counted as equal to instructional enrollments.

"Rewards" of up to 10 percent of base grants are distributed to counties that meet their goals and also achieve 50 percent or more of the "core indicators." Most core indicators are targets for achieving NRS goals, including retention, completion of learning levels, attaining a GED, gaining

[37] There are exceptions to this. For example, at Western Kentucky, the Marshall County Board of Education constructed a learning center for its adult education program.

employment, retaining employment, and entering postsecondary education or training. The amount of reward funding awarded to a county increases with the percentage of indicators it meets. In 2002-2003, approximately $800,000 in rewards was distributed, and most counties won rewards.[38] Although rewards may not be large in absolute dollar terms, they are of great importance to local programs.

In addition to base grant funding, KYAE distributes approximately $4 million in family literacy funds to local programs. Providers apply for family literacy support on the same form used to apply for base grant funds, although under a somewhat different set of rules. KYAE also administers approximately $1.5 million in Workforce Alliance grant funding that provides additional support to workforce education. (The Workforce Alliance is discussed beginning on page 68.) Finally, KYAE invests between $3 million and $4 million per year on a number of additional services. These include professional development, corrections education, public outreach, and other special services.[39]

(c) Cost per enrollment. KYAE reports that the average cost per enrollment of adult education in Kentucky was $380 in 2002-2003. If the $19 million in base grants and awards to local programs is divided by the estimated 100,000 learners served, the core funding to local programs is on the order of $190 per student (augmented by special funding for purposes such as family literacy and some workforce services). Of course, costs of different types of services vary widely, from a maximum allowable expenditure of $1,000 per family in family literacy programs, to very small amounts for short-duration interventions or assessments of incumbent workers provided by workforce education programs.[40]

This average cost per enrollment is well below that of many other states.[41] Among other things, it means that local programs in Kentucky are very tightly budgeted. And these tight budgets arguably are a major reason why local programs place so much emphasis on short-duration service.

[38] KYAE Policy Manual and communication from Terry Tackett of KYAE staff in January, 2004.
[39] KYAE budget figures are based on communications from Reecie Stagnolia, Terry Pruitt, and other KYAE staff.
[40] "AE Fact Sheet" and Policy Manual.
[41] See: Forrest P. Chisman, *Leading from the Middle: The State Role in Adult Education and Literacy*, published by CAAL in August 2002, p. 11, and available on the CAAL Web site.

KYAE's system of funding local programs reflects the policy imperatives that drive adult education in the state. Primary emphasis is placed on expanding enrollments to meet the need for service as reflected by KALS data. Thus, areas of the state with the greatest need for service receive the greatest funding, but there are strong incentives for all programs to expand service. The emphasis on workforce education is reflected both in the fact that this is an allowable use of base grant funding and of special funding streams. Finally, the expectation of performance is reflected in the rewards program.

(d) Use of KALS. It is apparent from the above discussion that KYAE relies heavily on data from the state's 1997 survey of adult literacy using the KALS instrument. The KALS survey is used both to set overall state enrollment goals and to determine goals and funding for local programs. Absent other measures of need for service, this may be a reasonable arrangement. However, as noted above, the KALS instrument and analysis is based on the 1992 federal National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) instrument. Both the NALS instrument and analyses based on it have been subjected to some serious challenges on methodological grounds.[42] In 2001, a DOE report indicated that the NALS data greatly exaggerated the number of adults with low functional literacy skills. In addition, Kentucky's KALS data is seven years old. KYAE managers are aware of these difficulties and have invested in the production of state and county data for Kentucky as part of a new federal study of the adult functional literacy levels due to be completed in 2005 (called National Assessment of Adult Literacy, NAAL). Based on the data from that study, Kentucky will be able to examine its goals for adult education service at both state and county levels.

(10) Accountability

The policy imperatives that guide KYAE are reinforced by the agency's accountability systems. On a regular basis, programs are required to report on enrollment, workforce education activities, attainment of targets, expenditures, staffing, and a variety of other performance criteria. Reports are filed electronically through CPE's central server.[43] This creates a rich and detailed unit record

[42] Unfortunately, the U.S. Department of Education has not published a user-friendly critique of NALS, although the most serious methodological criticism was raised by DOE staff. The most readily available version of this critique in found in a Washington Post article: "Millions of Adults Illiterate No More," Post, July 27, 2001, p. A9.
[43] KYAE Policy Manual.

database that provides KYAE with a real-time picture of adult education in Kentucky. KYAE makes abundant use of this data through regular reports and special analyses. Both assessment and planning in the state are well informed by data. In addition, each program must submit an extensive annual report each year, and KYAE staff conduct at least one site visit to each program per year. Any problems identified by these oversight mechanisms are addressed by KYAE program improvement staff and procedures.

Programs must apply for funding every two years, consistent with the principle of "direct and equitable access" to funding. The application form is comprehensive and requires a detailed budget. Providers that perform below standards are replaced by other applicants, and they may be terminated before the end of the two-year period. Most changes in county providers come about when KYAE has terminated a contract or when existing providers no longer wish to offer service.[44]

These accountability procedures are intended to ensure compliance with KYAE policies and quality of service, as well as to identify and remedy problems that arise at the local level. The research on which this report is based was not extensive enough to determine how strategic planning at either the state or local levels is conducted in Kentucky, or the extent to which local programs participate in state planning. KYAE publications indicate that the agency is committed to a process of continuous program improvement informed by data. Unfortunately, this study did not have the resources to explore how that system operates beyond the accountability system.

(11) <u>Technology</u>

In addition to policy, funding, staff training, technical assistance, and marketing support, KYAE provides local programs with other forms of support through special initiatives. Strategically, one of the most important of these has been its investment in educational technology. The major investment has been the development of an online instructional system in collaboration with the Kentucky Virtual University.[45]

[44] KYAE Policy Manual and application forms on KYAE's Web site.
[45] Virtually all of the information in this section is based on interviews with Randolph Hollingsworth of KYVU and Shauna King-Simms of KCTCS.

The Virtual University is an operating unit within CPE. It was created by the same legislation that created KCTCS in 1997. Its mission is to create online instructional systems for all levels of postsecondary education. In 2001, KYAE (then DAEL) invested some $700,000 to support the development of an adult education "portal" by the Virtual University. It has invested comparable amounts to maintain and expand the service in subsequent years. Named Kentucky Virtual Adult Education (KYVAE), the portal is available at no charge to all KYAE programs and to individual students who sign up. KYVAE provides a variety of services, but among the most important are:

- Access to PLATO instructional software for GED preparation and a variety of other adult education and workforce skills areas;
- Access to the ACT WorkKeys database of skills requirements for various occupations and assessments and the WIN instructional software linked to that database;
- Access to nine customized training modules for KYAE staff, including the four required professional development courses and modules on the use of PLATO and WorkKeys; and
- Access to the Kentucky Virtual Library and to online technical support.

This was an important investment on the part of KYAE, because it entailed purchasing PLATO, WorkKeys, WIN, and related licenses for all 120 county adult education programs at a much lower cost than those licenses would have cost if purchased on a program-by-program basis.[46] KYAE set to work at once training adult education providers in the use of PLATO. To date, 900 staff have received all or some of the training required. KYAE has also shifted an increasing amount of its professional development to the less expensive on-line format. In the future, it expects to provide all required professional development courses online.

[46] PLATO is a computer-based educational software system from PLATO Learning, Inc. It provides a wide range of assessment and instructional products for K-12, higher education, job training, and adult education – including interactive instructional and assessment products for ABE, GED, and ESL. WorkKeys is a computer-based product of the American College Testing Service (ACT). It identifies the level of skills current and prospective employees need to be successful on the job. One major component of WorkKeys is a computerized assessment of eight employment-related skill areas (applied math, applied technology, business writing, listening, locating information, observation, reading for information, teamwork, and writing). Another component is a profile of 465 occupations relative to these skills. WIN is a product of Worldwide Interactive Network. It provides 36 levels of competency-based interactive instruction in the eight WorkKeys skill areas.

The Kentucky Virtual University reports that 3,416 adult learners and educators used the KYVAE portal in 2001-2003.[47] Individual programs report that they consider it a valuable resource. They appear to have the strongest interest in the PLATO courseware. This is primarily used as an instructional supplement, although KYVAE logs indicate that there are several hundred "virtual learners" – students who receive all of their instruction online.

The operation of KYVAE makes Kentucky a leadership state in the use of technology for adult education. It is an important and fast-growing service in its own right. In addition, it provides an important linkage to KCTCS.

Through cooperative arrangements, KYAE makes the PLATO software available at no cost to developmental education staff at KCTCS institutions. Students are "dually enrolled" in adult education and developmental education, and KYAE provides staff training in the use of PLATO to developmental education faculty. This arrangement has been strategically important; it has been a key component in forging many of the other linkages between adult education and community colleges in Kentucky discussed below.

(12) <u>Program Diversity</u>

As the foregoing discussion makes apparent, adult education programs in Kentucky operate within the framework of a large number of highly specific legislative and agency policies. These policies, together with the various services provided by KYAE and the funding system in place, may give the impression that in Kentucky, adult education is centrally managed in a top-down way. Compared to some states this may be true. However, state staff members view their mission as providing local programs with the essential resources they need to operate high-quality programs. Within this support system, they expect and encourage diversity and initiative at the local program level.

Most local program managers share this view. Although they may disagree with particular KYAE policies and may wish that those policies imposed less of a paperwork burden, they generally credit state policies, services, and leadership for providing essential support for their work. That is, they do

[47] Interview with Randolph Hollingsworth. The same data is found on KYAE's Web site.

not feel unduly constrained. With a few exceptions, this study revealed no undue constraints. In fact, there is great diversity among local programs, within the framework established by legislative and agency policy. To appreciate the nature and extent of this diversity, however, it is necessary to examine particular adult education service providers and their linkages to community colleges in more depth. That is the subject of Part II of this report, which follows.

II: LINKAGES

In Kentucky, adult education and community colleges are linked at various levels and in different ways. As discussed above, the adult education and community college systems have legislative mandates to achieve the same overriding goal: to promote economic development through education; in particular, to increase enrollments and success rates. In addition, the two systems have overlapping policy mandates to provide adult and remedial services to undereducated adults.

Although adult education and colleges are administered by separate agencies, they are sister education systems under the aegis of The Council for Postsecondary Education. Working relations between the two agencies appear to be good at the senior level. The chancellor of KCTCS and the vice president for adult education enjoy a mutually supportive, collegial relationship. State level staff appear to collaborate and exchange information when necessary on projects of mutual concern.

As a measure of the importance attached to collaboration, a full time assistant to the chancellor is assigned to adult education issues, supplemented by other staff as needed. And liaison with colleges is an ongoing responsibility of many KYAE staff members.

At the program level, the extent of collaboration varies, depending on the institutions involved, their leadership, and the nature of particular programs that link the two systems. State level staff encourage collaboration at the local level by policy directives, efforts to improve communication, joint training opportunities, leadership initiatives, and other means. The extent of local collaboration can be understood best by examining the specific forms that linkage between colleges and adult education takes in Kentucky.

Collaboration at both the state and local levels (and between them) may be less robust than would be ideal, simply because all staff have multiple and very heavy operational responsibilities. In addition, despite efforts to improve management, both KCTCS and KYAE are, in the end, government bureaucracies. Among other things, this means that staff in both agencies (and at the local level) must shoulder a substantial burden of procedural requirements that can consume a great deal of their

time. Both KCTCS and KYAE have made an effort to address these problems by computerizing operations and other management improvements.

Two areas of linkage have been discussed above – the sharing of technology resources and the TANF Ready-to-Learn initiative. Linkage takes many other forms, however. For example, in corrections education, KYAE provides services to inmates in county jails and local lock-ups, whereas KCTCS provides services to inmates in state prisons.

The following sections of this paper will focus on the most common forms of linkage: (A) provision of adult education service by colleges, (B) programs to enhance transitions from adult education to colleges, (C) partnerships between colleges and adult education programs, and (D) workforce education programs.

A. PROVISION

(1) Overview[48]

In 2003, 12 of Kentucky's community and technical colleges were providers of adult education services. That is, following KYAE's policy of funding programs by county, 12 colleges had contracts to serve one or more counties. Three (Southeast Community College in Cumberland, Maysville Community and Technical College in Maysville, and Somerset Community College) had contracts to serve two counties. Thus colleges provided service in 15 of Kentucky's 120 counties. They served 8 percent of the counties, and comprised 13 percent of all providers.

The number of students enrolled in college programs, however, was disproportionate to the number of institutions providing service. In total, the 13 provider colleges enrolled 18,317 adult education students in 2002-2003. This was approximately 19.6 percent of all enrollments. Although colleges served only a small percentage of counties, they served a considerably larger percentage of adult education learners.

(2) Program Size

A few college programs are quite small. Four county programs provided by colleges enroll fewer than 500 students. (Maysville serves 68 students in Robertson County and 429 in Mason County; Elizabethtown Community and Technical College serves 251 in Meade County; Somerset Community College serves 445 in Casey County and 645 in McCreary County).

Many college programs, however, tend to be considerably larger than the median size of adult education programs in Kentucky (495 enrollments), discussed above. Three of the seven largest county programs are managed by colleges (in Daviess County/Owensboro, Fayette County/ Lexington, and Kenton County/Covington).

[48] Based on data supplied by Terry Tackett of KYAE and Shauna King-Simms of KCTCS.

The primary reason college programs tend to be unusually large is that they are generally located in urban areas with large populations. Hence, the number of adults who need service in many counties where colleges are providers is well above average. Because KYAE provides formula funding based on need for service, this means that funding for these large college programs is well above the average for county programs as well. In fact, colleges have the county contracts for most of the major urban areas in Kentucky, except Louisville and Paducah. Western Kentucky Community and Technical College has expressed interest in bidding for the county contract in McCracken County (Paducah) in 2004. College programs also are located in rural areas, however, and they are located in all regions of the state.[49]

Consistent with variations in the need for service in the counties they serve, colleges also differ in the amount of funding they receive for adult education and the number of staff they employ. At one extreme, formula funding based on need for service may be as small as $100,000, and only two or three staff members are employed; at the other extreme, one large program reports funding in excess of $1 million and more than 40 paid staff. Like other programs, those at colleges use few volunteers. Central Kentucky Technical College, however, uses 300 volunteers, primarily to serve low-level ESL and ABE learners. Owensboro Community and Technical College also uses a small cadre of volunteers and reports that it intends to begin a volunteer recruitment drive.[50]

Most college programs are only a few years old. Thus, the community college role in providing adult education has grown very recently and very fast. If present plans are realized, it will continue to grow. Several provider colleges reported that they may apply for additional county contracts, and some nonprovider colleges are considering bids for contracts.

(2) <u>Services</u>

College programs differ significantly in the services offered, depending on resources and local needs. The smaller county programs primarily offer ABE service. The larger programs offer the full range of traditional adult education and workforce services.

[49] Ibid. and "County Profiles" on KYAE Web site.
[50] Ibid. and questionnaire responses from Central Kentucky and Owensboro.

Because they tend to be located in urban areas, colleges provide a disproportionate percentage of ESL service. Although eight college county programs offer no ESL service at all, the remaining seven serve 1,898 ESL students – more than half the total (3,451 in programs with 12 or more hours of instruction in 2002-2003) served in the entire state.

Because some college programs are far larger than the median-size adult education program in Kentucky, college programs in total enroll a large percentage of the state's ASE students and produce a large percentage of its GED graduates. In 2002-2003, 1,300 of the 2,788 students reported by KCTCS as "Earn[ed] High School Equivalent" were served by colleges, and 1,694 of the 5,398 reported as enrolled in "ASE Low" were enrolled in programs managed by colleges.[51]

Aside from their larger size and the large numbers of ESL and GED students they serve, college programs appear to be similar to other adult education programs in Kentucky in many respects. Most programs meet their enrollment goals, and they appear about as likely as other programs to report that students have completed levels of instruction.

Like other adult education programs, those provided by colleges differ in the relative emphasis they place on workforce education, as opposed to traditional adult education. At one extreme, the Owensboro Community and Technical College reports that at least 1,515 students were served by workforce adult education programs in 2002-2003, compared to 590 adults who received traditional ABE, GED, and ESL service. In contrast, Central Kentucky Technical College (Lexington) reported 460 workforce students, compared to 1,182 served by traditional programs, and Big Sandy Community and Technical College's Mayo Campus reported serving no workforce students in its adult education program in 2002-2003.[52]

These numbers reflect the fact that the adult education programs of some colleges address the state's goal of improving the workforce in different ways. Some emphasize direct services to incumbent

[51] KYAE County Profiles; KYAE 2002-2003 NRS Report.
[52] Responses to questionnaire for this report.

workers, whereas others place relatively more emphasis on GED completion, ESL, and transitions to college.

(3) Integration into Colleges

Based on interviews with their managers, the college programs appear to be relatively well integrated into their host institutions.[53] All of the college providers mention adult education in their mission statements, and appear to provide adequate space and overhead support. At most colleges, adult education staff are paid at the same rate as other comparable college employees and enjoy the same benefits. All paid staff must meet the minimum educational requirements established by KCTCS, but some colleges establish additional requirements, such as years of experience or other credentials. Adult education staff at most colleges report that they have a peer relationship with other college staff, and that they interact frequently with their colleagues, both in particular projects and in overall college affairs.

Although adult education programs are located at different places in college bureaucracies, all of the program directors interviewed effectively have direct access to their presidents, and one formally reports directly to him. Interviews with three college presidents revealed that they were extremely knowledgeable about their adult education programs and very supportive of them.

In most, but not all, of the college programs, students have the same status and rights to use facilities and services as other college students. Program managers identified the use of computer laboratories and other instructional services as the most common joint use of facilities.

College guidance and counseling services are often unavailable to adult education students, unless they are seeking to enroll in credit courses. Counseling was cited as the area that most needs improvement by college program managers. Most counseling is offered during orientation programs at the time of initial enrollment. Additional counseling is provided on an informal basis by teachers. One college (Central Kentucky) devotes a full-time staff member to assessment and counseling.

[53] The following section is based on site visits, group interviews, phone interviews, and questionnaire responses. See Appendix for a list of persons interviewed.

Most college program managers interviewed indicated that they believe adult education students probably underuse college services that are available.

At most colleges for which information was provided, the majority of adult education instruction is given on campus. This is facilitated by the fact that most colleges have multiple campuses. A number of colleges report that they provide additional services (such as assessment and limited instruction) at One Stop Centers, correctional institutions, community centers, and schools.

(4) College Support

Based on interviews with college program managers (see Appendix), it appears that no provider college gives direct financial subsidies to adult education programs.[54] Financially, these programs are treated as grant programs that must live within the budgets supplied by KYAE and other sources. Considering that Kentucky community colleges have great discretion in the way they can spend their state funds, there is no inherent reason why this should be the case. Presidents who were queried on this point replied that their budgets are too tight to provide financial subsidies.

All college programs reported considerable in-kind subsidies, however. Such subsidies include provision of free instructional space, access to learning laboratories, and economies of scale in assessment, data management, personnel services, and meeting reporting requirements. Although program managers believe that these subsidies may be quite large, they could not estimate their value. It is, therefore, impossible to tell whether in-kind subsidies exceed those that might be available to programs managed by school boards or other providers.

Just as colleges do not subsidize adult education programs, the programs do not subsidize their host colleges, although some may pay rent and a share of other overhead costs. Given the funding mechanisms for colleges, there is no way they can. KCTCS does not fund colleges to provide adult education as such. Moreover, adult education students are not included in head counts used by

[54] Ibid.

KCTCS formulas, except in the case of the small number of adult education students who are dually enrolled and some overlap in workforce development numbers.

Hence, colleges in Kentucky have nothing to gain financially by providing adult education, and they have at least some things to lose – managerial oversight responsibilities and any in-kind subsidies they may provide that are not reimbursed by adult education funding. Later sections of this report will show, however, that adult education programs can provide indirect forms of subsidies to colleges through sharing resources, relieving some developmental education responsibilities, and supporting contract education programs.

(5) Why Colleges Provide Services

If colleges realize no direct financial gain by providing adult education services, why have an increasing number of colleges chosen to do so? College presidents and program managers gave three answers to this question.[55]

First, the presidents of provider colleges believe that it is part of their mission as comprehensive community colleges. They take literally the injunctions of HB-1 that community colleges should provide adult education of all sorts. Colleges have not been anxious to displace existing providers in their communities, however. For the most part, they have bid on county contracts only when local providers were defunded or asked them to do so. They see their role in adult education as providing an important community service when other institutions cannot provide it.

Second, the presidents of provider colleges see adult education programs as a potential source of students. Part of their mission is to serve undereducated adults. They hope that by integrating adult education into their operations, they can facilitate transitions to postsecondary education for this population. Most college programs are too young for presidents to be sure how well this is accomplished. But they believe that it can and should be accomplished.

[55] Ibid. Of particular importance were interviews with the presidents of Central Kentucky, Jefferson, and Owensboro.

Third, all provider colleges have extensive workplace education programs. All of these programs require some component of basic skills instruction. Presidents of provider colleges believe that integrating basic skills into their workplace programs may be accomplished more efficiently if both are under the same roof. Again, there is little evidence of this.

When asked why other colleges do not provide service, both presidents and staff gave the same two answers: leadership and need. In their view, presidents of nonprovider colleges either do not have the same comprehensive view of their missions, or they believe that existing local providers adequately meet the need. The role of colleges in locations where other providers are perceived to meet the need is discussed later. As might be expected, program directors tend to emphasize the importance of leadership, and often cite the vision of particular presidents as the major reason why their colleges provide service.

(6) Quality of Service

The program directors of provider colleges tend to assume that colleges offer better adult education services than do most other providers. They cite very little hard evidence to back this up, however. Among the factors they cite are:

- They can attract higher quality staff.
- They can provide superior facilities, particularly joint-use facilities such as learning laboratories.
- Students who have failed in high school are more willing to attend adult education classes in a non-high school setting; the “stigma” of adult education is reduced.
- Students are motivated by the college setting and like being treated as college students;
- Economies of scale reduce overhead costs on both program managers and teaching staff.
- A college location motivates students to aspire to postsecondary education, and it facilitates the development of programs that will help them do so.
- It is easier to develop linkages with workplace education programs and other academic programs when adult educators and other college personnel are treated as peers, and are “just down the hall.”

- The relatively larger size of most college programs allows more resources for staff and curriculum development, innovation, and meeting the needs of individual students.

As noted, very little data exists to test most of these propositions, although most college staff involved in adult education believe them to be true. Data on transitions, workforce education, and other possible advantages will be discussed below.

Overall, it is hard to factor out the relative importance of the size of college programs from the fact that they are provided by colleges. It is also hard to factor out the importance of local circumstances. The best that can be said with certainty is that over the last few years, the number and percentage of Kentucky's adult education students served by colleges has increased significantly. This has been due to decisions by KYAE that colleges should be awarded the competitive contracts to provide adult education services in an increasing number of counties.

(7) <u>Barriers</u>

Program managers in at least some colleges do not believe that their programs are living up to their full potential.[56] The barriers they most commonly cite are KYAE's policies of setting constantly escalating enrollment goals and treating all enrollments as equal for the purpose of meeting those goals – whether those enrollments are in short-duration or long-duration services, and whether they are instructional services or "assessment only."

At least some program managers believe that the pressure to increase enrollments along with a small cost-per-student reimbursement (an average of $190 in base grants and rewards) makes it very difficult to budget for the long-term, high-cost services some adult learners need. One program manager cited the difficulties of maintaining a high intensity (and highly effective) ESL program under these circumstances. Others cited limits on their ability to provide supportive services. In general, many program managers believe that enrollment goals and reimbursement policies limit innovation. They argue that programs are so tightly budgeted that only the largest programs have

[56] Interviews with program managers (see Appendix). Program managers were by no means united on these issues, but they invariably discussed them.

sufficient funds to devote to developing new services, strategic planning, or other forms of program improvement.

Other program managers dismiss these concerns. They believe that there is more than enough need for all types of service. Programs that budget carefully, and make full use of KYAE supportive services and special grant programs, can find the means to provide robust instruction. They also believe that the pressure to provide short-duration service generates its own kind of creativity by encouraging programs to attend to individualized learning needs of students and move them through the instructional system as quickly as possible. Finally, they cite the relatively high success rates of Kentucky programs, compared to national norms. And they note that part of the adult education mission in Kentucky is workplace instruction, which usually entails short interventions.

No data is available to resolve the differences between these two points of view. They are, however, strongly held on both sides.

(8) Summary

It seems clear that community colleges as providers fill a large and growing need for adult education in Kentucky, and they provide services that are at least on par to those of other comparable providers and possibly superior. Colleges have increasingly “picked up the slack” in the state’s adult education system, and it appears that they will continue to do so. Their role as providers is both enabled and encouraged by state policies that establish adult education as a college mission, and by local leadership and the needs of local communities.

B: TRANSITIONS

(1) Overview

One of the most common linkages between adult education and community colleges nationwide is the transition of adult learners to enrollment in colleges. Most adult education programs offer GED preparation and/or testing; and the GED, as a high school equivalency certification, may prepare students for postsecondary education at community colleges and other institutions. Thus, community colleges and adult education programs are linked in the sense that colleges are at least one of the customers for adult education. *Adult education programs can provide colleges with qualified students*.

Promoting transitions from adult education to postsecondary enrollment is one of the stated missions of both KYAE and KCTCS. As noted above, one of the five "critical questions" KYAE has established to define and evaluate its mission is: Are more adult learners advancing on to postsecondary education? Moreover, provision of adult education is included in the charter legislation of KCTCS as part of its mandate to increase enrollments and provide comprehensive service. This mandate recognizes that colleges will have to reach out to underprepared adults if they are to increase the number of Kentuckians who receive postsecondary education. It also recognizes that this will require remedial education of various sorts. Increasing transitions to postsecondary education has been a state-level priority for both systems since their establishment.

(2) Effectiveness

Precise numbers for how successful adult education programs have been in facilitating transitions to postsecondary education are difficult to establish. At the low end of estimates, KYAE reported to the federal government that 2,480 adult education students who met NRS criteria enrolled in postsecondary education or training.[57]

[57] KYAE 2002-2003 NRS Report.

This number is problematic in Kentucky, as it is in other states, because NRS criteria do not ask states to distinguish between postsecondary education and training, and because those criteria ask states to count (for these purposes) only students who received more than 12 hours of instruction and who stated enrollment in postsecondary education and training as their goal. Moreover, the numbers reported by the NRS system include only those students who were enrolled in adult education programs and made a transition to further education in the reporting year. Thus, they omit students prepared for postsecondary education who may make this transition in subsequent years. Because of these limitations, Kentucky's NRS report, like those of other states, can only be regarded as a low end estimate.

In an attempt to obtain a more meaningful estimate of the effectiveness of its programs in promoting transitions, KYAE has tracked how many GED completers in 2000-2001enrolled in postsecondary institutions in subsequent years. The analysis shows that almost 22 percent of this cohort of GED completers had enrolled in postsecondary education by the fall of 2003.[58] Two-thirds of this enrollment was in KCTCS institutions; the balance was in four-year institutions. This is a fairly impressive achievement for adult education programs. It shows that they can and do prepare students for transition to college. However, the enrollment rate was well below that of high school graduates. Furthermore, additional analysis shows that most GED graduates do not fare as well as high school graduates in college. They are much more likely to be enrolled in developmental education courses, and those enrolled in such courses are much less likely than high school graduates to subsequently enroll in credit courses.[59]

Whatever the transition rates of adult education students may be, KYAE, KCTCS, and many colleges do not believe they are good enough. It has become a priority goal at both the state and local level to increase transitions. This was a major emphasis of KYAE's "go higher" public relations and marketing campaign in 2003. In that same year, KYAE and KCTCS joined forces to award $70,000 in Transition Pilot Demonstration Grants to three colleges. These one-year grants support strategic investments by the colleges to increase transitions. At the same time, individual

[58]KYAE Web site, "AE Fact Sheet."
[59] Special analysis conducted for this report by Linda Morefield of KCTCS in January 2004.

colleges have been taking initiatives of their own – and most of them credit KYAE/KCTCS leadership for encouraging and facilitating these efforts.[60]

(3) Transitions Policy

All of these efforts operate within an intellectual and policy framework established by KCTCS that specifically addresses transitions. The framework is detailed and explicit, and it effectively establishes a roadmap for movement from adult education to postsecondary education. This explicit transition policy, which is rare among states, establishes a foundation on which transition programs can be built.

KCTCS Policy 14.3 establishes the assessment and placement policy for community and technical colleges.[61] The details of the policy are complex, allowing for variations among programs, skill levels, and waivers. An oversimplified explanation that captures its basic logic follows:

All credential-seeking students must demonstrate minimum academic skills needed for program success through the ACT or COMPASS assessment. Alternative assessments (e.g. WorkKeys) and required performance levels have been established for selected certificate programs. Students who have not taken the ACT or who score below the established minimum level must take the COMPASS examination. Students who test below an established level in that examination are referred to one or more developmental education courses (depending on their skill deficiencies). Students who test below an even lower established level are referred to adult education.

In the words of KCTCS legislation and policy, the provisions of Policy 14.3 are intended to create a "seamless" system of educational progress. Creating "seamless" systems is a major goal of Kentucky educational policy.

By the provisions of 14.3, adult education is closely linked to community colleges: it is incorporated into their admissions policy. Most simply put, the basic logic of the policy is that adult education

[60] Information on public relations campaign and Transitions Pilots Demonstration Grants provided by Cheryl King of KYAE and Shauna King-Simms of KCTCS.
[61] KCTCS Policy Manual on KCTCS Web site.

will serve as the lower end of developmental education. Adult education will provide remediation in basic skills for those students whose skills fall below the level that developmental education courses can best serve.

Implicit in this policy is a ladder of opportunity for undereducated adults. Those with very low basic skills may progress through adult education to developmental education and then onto credit enrollment. There is nothing to prevent students from leaping ahead. That is, they may move directly from adult education to credit enrollment if they can obtain adequate COMPASS scores. And some do. But the tacit assumption is that most students with low basic skills will proceed through a three-step process with clear markers along the way.

Just as this policy incorporates adult education into community colleges, it incorporates community college standards into adult education. For adult educators who wish to increase transitions, preparing their students to pass the COMPASS examination is an essential goal. It is as important as the GED. In fact, some KCTCS programs do not require a high school diploma or equivalent for enrollment. Moreover, students who pass the GED do not necessarily have the skills required to score at COMPASS levels that would allow them to enroll in credit programs. Fourteen percent of KCTCS's developmental education students in 2002-2003 were GED graduates.[62]

(4) <u>Implementation Problems</u>

There are a number of difficulties in implementing this "seamless" system. Both state officials and individual colleges have increasingly devoted their energies to overcoming these.

One problem, identified by both adult educators and college staff, is that the "cut scores" on the COMPASS that would result in referrals to adult education are presently set so low by KCTCS policy that few students are referred to adult education. An increasing number of colleges have responded to this problem by setting higher cut scores for their institutions, resulting in increased enrollments.[63]

[62] Based on special analysis conducted for this report by Linda More Field of KCTCS in January 2004.
[63] This section is based on interviews with providers (see Appendix).

Another difficulty reported by both adult educators and college staff is the reluctance of developmental educators and some college administrators to relinquish students to adult education. Some developmental educators doubt the competence of adult education programs to provide remediation that will prepare students for success in developmental education, let alone credit work. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that adult education programs use the TABE assessment for diagnostic purposes. The relationship between scores on the TABE and COMPASS has been a matter of contention. In 2002, KCTCS and KYAE collaborated with ACT on research that allows TABE scores to be equated with COMPASS scores.[64] This "TABE/COMPASS Concordance" has helped to build understanding among the two programs. Some colleges are now piloting this "crosswalk" to determine whether they should use TABE scores in lieu of COMPASS scores.

Perhaps a greater difficulty has been the reluctance of developmental educators and college administrators to relinquish students to adult education. Colleges are under pressures to increase enrollment numbers, just as adult education programs are, and developmental education students count toward enrollment goals. Moreover, adult education programs are free. By relinquishing students to adult education, Kentucky community colleges are foregoing tuition that these students might otherwise pay for developmental courses.

(5) <u>Overcoming Barriers</u>

(a) <u>Dual enrollment.</u> A partial solution to these difficulties is to make creative use of the KCTCS "dual enrollment" policy. In its origins, this policy was intended to allow high school students to gain college credit for college-level courses provided by high school or college staff. Students are dually enrolled in that they count toward the enrollment goals of both high schools and colleges.[65] A number of colleges are now experimenting with applying this concept to the adult education/developmental education interface. Students receiving remedial education in adult education programs are dually enrolled in developmental programs. In some cases, these students

[64] Information and documents provided by Shauna King-Simms of KCTCS.
[65] Information and documents on dual enrollment largely provided by Shauna King-Simms of KCTCS. The author also consulted published KCTCS dual enrollment guidelines as well as the practices of selected colleges.

attend both adult education and developmental education classes at the same time, depending on their skill deficiencies.

For example, a student who has a very low reading score, but a higher math score, might be enrolled in an adult education reading program and a developmental math class. Both programs would receive credit for the student, and some developmental tuition would be paid. At present, the number of dual enrollments of this kind are small. Where implemented, however, they break down boundaries between adult and developmental education and create a more seamless, individualized, competency-based system of education.

(b) College preparation courses. Another effort to break down boundaries between the two systems involves one factor that KCTCS placement policy does not address. Research indicates that success in college depends on a variety of "college readiness" skills not usually taught as such in academic programs.[66] These include study skills, research skills, creating written and oral presentations that meet college standards, and a general orientation to college requirements and culture. Developmental educators generally assume that these skills are embedded in their courses. Most adult educators would concede that the standard GED curriculum does not teach them.

At a growing number of Kentucky colleges, short college readiness courses have been developed to bridge this gap.[67] These are sometimes taught by developmental educators, sometimes by adult education programs, and sometimes by both as dual enrollments. Whatever their designation, they have a triple advantage: (1) they provide students with skills they may need to succeed in college; (2) they reassure colleges about the readiness of underprepared students; and (3) they enlist adult and developmental educators in a common effort that may result in developmental tuition in some cases.

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[66] An excellent summary of this research is found in Judith A. Alamprese, *Transitioning Adult Learners to Postsecondary Education*, a policy brief prepared for the federal Office of Adult and Vocational Education in 2003. See also Robert H. McCabe (ed.), *Yes We Can: A Community College Guide for Developing America's Underprepared* (joint publication of the League for Innovation in the Community College and the American Association of Community Colleges, 2003), esp. Chapters 3-6. See also forthcoming CAAL publication on developmental education by Hunter Boylan and colleagues of the National Center for Developmental Education.

[67] Examples of courses in place or under development were found at Central Kentucky, Jefferson, and Western Kentucky.

(6) The Emerging Model

These various strategies to encourage transitions to postsecondary education have a common theme: Consistent with KCTCS policy, they assign the adult education system the task of serving the least-prepared developmental students. Effectively, adult education becomes the lower level of developmental education. This is accomplished in different ways at different colleges. For purposes of illustration, it is helpful to look at one of the colleges at which the potential for linking adult and postsecondary education is most fully realized. This is the Mayo campus of the Big Sandy Community and Technical College.

Program Profile 1: The Mayo Campus of the Big Sandy District[68]

The Mayo Campus is located in the mountainous eastern part of Kentucky. Until 2003, it was the Mayo Technical College – founded in 1938 – and its focus is still on technical education. In 2003, Mayo was joined with Prestonsburg Community College to form the Big Sandy Community and Technical College District.

Service area. For the last ten years, Mayo has had the state adult education contract to serve Johnson County, where it is located. Johnson is coal mining country (as is most of the Big Sandy District), and the decline of the coal industry in recent decades has devastated the local economy. With a population of approximately 24,000, Johnson County had a 26 percent poverty rate according to the 2000 census, and the state KALS study in 1997 showed that approximately 49 percent of working age people had low levels of basic skills (as opposed to about 38 percent statewide). Private non-farm employment fell 6 percent from 1990-1999 to 4,630 people employed, and unemployment exceeded 8 percent. In short, the need for both education and economic development in Johnson County is great.

Program dimensions. The Mayo adult education program is small compared to many. In 2002-2003 it served 714 adult and developmental students, with a staff of four. In that year it provided no workforce education services, primarily because there are no factories or other large businesses in the county. The staff is prepared to provide workforce services, however. They have a close working relationship with the regional workforce education coordinator, from whom they receive referrals for adult and developmental programs. The staff also provides assessment services upon request.

Most of Mayo's adult education students test into the upper levels of ABE or ASE. Given the low basic skills level of the County, this may seem surprising. The staff is prepared to serve students at all levels. They believe that the distribution of students is partly due to two facts: local school

[68] This section is based almost entirely on interviews with Big Sandy staff (see Appendix) as well as questionnaire responses and other documents provided by them. It is augmented by KYAE County Profile information.

systems have good special education programs, and one of the state's better facilities for serving the learning disabled is nearby. Mayo has a good working relationship with both systems. In fact, it provides assessment and some remedial instruction in two of the local schools in return for classroom space.

Common management of adult and developmental education. The most remarkable feature of the Mayo program is that it unifies adult and developmental education. The director of adult education is also the director of the college's developmental program. More importantly, Mayo makes practically no operational distinction between adult and developmental students. These students may be distinguished for administrative purposes, affecting which students pay tuition and which do not. For instructional purposes, however, all students are treated alike. The Mayo staff estimates that about 75 percent of its students have postsecondary education as an initial goal. In practice, virtually all are regarded as potential college students.

Learner-centered instruction. In its essentials, the strategy of the Mayo program is fairly simple. All instruction is individualized and competency based. Students are assessed upon entry. They promptly meet with a counselor to discuss their test scores and educational/career options. If their test score indicates that they require adult/developmental education, they meet with a staff member for further counseling and to develop an individualized learning plan. The staff believes that meeting face to face with potential students immediately upon assessment is crucial to retention.

Individual learning plans are flexible and are adapted to the changing needs and aspirations of students. Most goals include passing the GED and scoring high enough on the COMPASS to undertake academic work. However, greatest emphasis is placed on determining exactly what skills each student must master to achieve these goals. In some cases students require just a brief brush up in math or writing; in other cases they require more extensive instruction in one or more subjects.

The Mayo staff says that they do not want to waste the time of students or scarce instructional resources by drilling students in skills they have already mastered. Rather the staff is dedicated to determining exactly what skills each student needs to improve, and then to moving that person along as quickly as possible. The result is that, in fact, many students do move through the program very quickly. Mayo is a prime example of Kentucky's propensity to make the most of short-term interventions.

Most classes at Mayo are mixed ability classes. There are no set courses, although developmental and adult sequences of instruction are distinguished. Upon completion of an adult sequence, students are post tested with the ASSET assessment, and the next stages of their learning plans are developed.

In many cases, adult and developmental students are served in the same classes, and each receives individualized instruction to meet his or her needs. Most classes are small and scheduled at times convenient for adult students, including nights and weekends. Most classes are held on campus, but the staff responds to opportunities to hold classes in other locations. For example, under memoranda of understanding, Mayo provides assessment and some remedial instruction at the three other

locations in the Big Sandy District – in counties where Mayo does not have the KYAE contract – and receives referrals from the Prestonsburg campus.

All Mayo adult/developmental students are treated as college students, and have the same rights and privileges accorded to credit students. This includes financial and career counseling. The Mayo adult/developmental program has developed a close working relationship with the college's guidance and counseling staff. Adult education staff believe that guidance and counseling staff understand the needs of adult and developmental students, who are provided assistance on request and through referrals from the instructional staff. Mayo is one campus on which central guidance services are not only available to adult education students, but also used by them.

In short, the Mayo program is student centered and competency based. The goal of the Mayo staff is to treat each student as an individual, and to treat all students with respect.

This philosophy extends beyond the period when students are formally enrolled in adult or developmental education. Students are encouraged to seek help with basic skills problems they may encounter after they have enrolled in credit classes, and some do. Effectively, the Mayo program provides a basic skills safety net for all of its students.

Staffing and program support. The Mayo staff is well-trained and exceptionally devoted to their work. They enjoy the same status and benefits as other college staff. They make flexible use of technology (in the form of a computer lab) as well as other instructional tools as needed. A discussion with staff members indicates a high degree of sophistication about instructional options as well as flexibility in how best to apply those options to meet individual learner gains.

A program of this sort requires staff to work long hours, respond to student needs on short notice, and develop close relationships with students. The program director admits that this type of work is not suited to everyone. But morale in the program is high and the program appears to have staying power. The incumbent director is the second person to occupy this position, and she receives strong support from the acting director of the campus. In fact, leadership from the acting director (titled the "president" before the merger with Prestonburg) is cited as a major factor in the program's success. The acting director not only supports the program; he understands it thoroughly.

Mayo makes use of dual enrollment in a variety of ways. Some students are dually enrolled in adult and developmental education. For example, GED students receive institutional credit for the reading portion of their instruction. Moreover, some credit students are dually enrolled in adult/ developmental classes. The goal is to provide students with whatever support they need.

Finances. The Mayo program was supported entirely by a KYAE grant of $184,263 in 2002-2003, plus generous in-kind support from the college in the form of classrooms, financial management, personnel, counseling, and other services. In cash terms, this equates to an average expenditure per student of approximately $258 per year. This low cost is apparently attributable to the success of short-term interventions, as well as overhead support.

Effectiveness. The effectiveness of Mayo's program is apparent in its program statistics. According to KYAE statistics, an astonishing 98 percent of Mayo students with a postsecondary goal entered

postsecondary education in 2002-2003, and 92 percent of students with the goal of obtaining a GED attained that goal. Collectively these students comprised 60 percent of Mayo's adult education enrollment in 2002-2003. The Mayo staff believes that these one-year transition numbers underestimate the effects of their program. They estimate that approximately 85 percent of their adult education students enroll in credit programs. Data from 2000-2001 show that 90 percent of Mayo's adult/developmental students who enroll in credit courses graduate from college.

The success rates of Mayo's program are exceptional. They are a tribute to what can be accomplished by a college that is dedicated to promoting postsecondary transitions by using every tool available within the KCTCS and KYAE policy framework. Ultimately the key to success appears to have been the commitment of the college and the program director to break down the boundaries between adult and developmental instruction. This has resulted in a remarkably seamless, individualized, student-centered, and competency-based system that has become firmly established in the culture of the college.

The Mayo program shows that with strong leadership and creative program design, adult education and community colleges can be closely linked to achieve postsecondary transitions in Kentucky. Other colleges accomplish this goal in other ways.

C. PARTNERSHIPS[69]

(1) The Importance of Partnerships

One of the most interesting features about the role colleges play in Kentucky's adult education system is that it is not limited to their role as providers. A number of community colleges have developed vigorous partnerships with other providers. Some of these are provider colleges; but the largest partnership arrangements are between nonprovider colleges and programs managed by local boards of education. College partnerships add value to both adult education and the colleges involved by establishing a division of labor and mutual support systems. The Kentucky case shows that these partnerships can be at least as productive for advancing the goals of adult education and community colleges as is provision of service.

(2) Policy and Practice

Partnerships between colleges and other providers are effectively required by KCTCS and KYAE mandates that assign responsibility for adult education to both colleges and adult education programs, wherever they are located. A complete inventory of partnership arrangements is not available. By all indications they take many different forms. But whatever form they take, most partnerships focus on increasing transitions from adult education to postsecondary studies, following the assessment/referral guidelines established by KCTCS policy.

At the very least, most nonprovider colleges reportedly collaborate with adult education programs (and provider colleges) in their districts by referring students who fall below COMPASS cut scores to adult educators in accordance with KCTCS policy. This requires at least an administrative partnership, and may require a much closer relationship that includes establishing curricular and staffing expectations on both sides. The barriers to referrals are discussed below. Some colleges are reportedly better able to overcome those barriers than are others. That is, some colleges opt to keep

[69] This section is based on interviews with program managers and presidents, as well as on supporting documentation they provided (see Appendix).

most of their remedial students in developmental programs, and the extent to which they make referrals to adult education differ.

Reportedly, too, many colleges attempt to ease the transition of GED graduates to postsecondary enrollment, by such means as raising awareness of adult education staff and students about postsecondary opportunities and requirements and active recruitment drives to attract GED students. In addition, colleges often serve as the venue for local and regional staff training offered by KYAE and its contractors.

But these forms of partnerships only begin to realize the potential for alliances between adult education and community colleges in Kentucky. At a few colleges, however, the potential for partnership is much more fully realized. These are important models for Kentucky and for the nation. Brief profiles of two of these follow.

Program Profile 2: Jefferson County Community College [70]

The partners. By far the largest adult education program in the state is located in Jefferson County (Louisville). It enrolls more than 11,000 students each year (10 percent of the state total) and is managed by the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS). Louisville is also the home base of the largest college in the KCTCS family – Jefferson Community College (JCC), with a credit enrollment of approximately 6,000 students. This college has been combined with Jefferson Technical College (3,000 student enrollment) to form a district that provides instruction at three campuses in Louisville, as well as a campus in Carroll County and a new campus in Shelby County. The Jefferson district became a "provider" college in 2003 when the Carroll County board of education voluntarily relinquished the program. But it is JCC's role as a partner in Jefferson County, where it does not hold the contract, that is of greatest interest for an examination of partnerships.

Background of the partnership. JCPS and JCC have long had various kinds of working arrangements. JCC students with low COMPASS scores were referred to adult education, but there was no formalized process for referrals. According to college staff, the college and the adult education system were in some respects competitors for the head counts and revenues that are generated by serving low-level learners. As a result, neither college faculty nor adult educators had a very good understanding of how the other's system operated or what it could accomplish.

[70] This profile is based entirely on interviews with local adult education and college staff, as well as materials provided by them, augmented by information on KYAE's County Profiles Web site.

The partnership that has been forged between JCPS and JCC has been a means of rationalizing the referral process, building new programs to enhance transitions, and assigning responsibility to each system for what it does best. In all of these respects, its primary aim has been to realize more fully the potential of KCTCS referral and transitions policies to achieve a remedial education system that is more cost-effective and serves students better.

Origins of the partnership: building trust. The present era of partnership began in 2002 though an initiative by JCPS. The JCPS adult education program had received a federal grant to construct a large learning laboratory with some surplus capacity. Leadership of the adult education program offered the use of the learning laboratory to JCC's developmental faculty for reading instruction at no cost, on the condition that students who used it would be counted as dually enrolled – i.e. they would be included in the head counts of both systems. The developmental faculty took advantage of this opportunity, partly because of limited learning laboratory space at the college and partly because the JCPS program had access to PLATO instructional software, which the college lacked. This access to PLATO was made possible by the purchase of PLATO licenses by KYAE for all of its programs, as discussed earlier.

This initiative built trust and understanding between the two systems. Not only did the college's developmental faculty come to appreciate the capacity of the adult education system, but they also came to appreciate its tools. Aside from PLATO, these included use of the TABE assessment. Although the COMPASS assessment, with which the developmental faculty was familiar, has a diagnostic component, that component was rarely used. Developmental faculty came to appreciate the diagnostic capacity of the TABE and its ability to target instruction more precisely on individual student learning needs. Classes began to take the form of individualized modular instruction, rather than set courses. Joint use of the learning laboratory grew rapidly. By the end of 2002, 24 classes in reading, writing, and math were offered there by college developmental faculty.

Linking adult and developmental education. After the appointment of a new President at JCC, the college and the JCPS program decided to take collaboration a step farther. By a memorandum of agreement in June 2003, both effectively agreed that JCPS would assume responsibility for the lower level of the college's developmental programs.

This was accomplished by setting mandatory cut scores on the COMPASS for referral to adult education that are considerably higher than those recommended by KCTCS. In addition, the college made available classroom space, computers, and other facilities on two of its campuses for adult education staff to provide this service. Adult education staff worked with college developmental faculty to design new curricula that would create a more "seamless transition" for low-scoring adults. Both sides of the partnership agreed to a "crosswalk" of COMPASS and TABE scores. Students referred to adult education are tested by the TABE to plan remediation and set goals. Upon completion of their program they are post tested by adult education staff using the COMPASS, TABE, or both, and the college has agreed to honor these assessments for future placement purposes.

The component of JCPS's adult education system offering these services was named Educational Enrichment Services (EES). Because it is an adult education service, EES is offered at no cost to students. Students are dually enrolled, but no tuition is charged. By the fall of 2003, 24 classes

enrolling 950 EES students were underway. Some EES graduates progress to developmental courses in one or more subjects, and some enroll in one or more credit classes.

An important final component of the EES program was put in place when EES received a KYAE transitions pilot grant in 2003 to fund the position of a full-time program coordinator. Considering the size and complexity of the program, a full-time coordinator is obviously of great value, but neither JCC nor JCPS could find the necessary funds in their budgets.

COMPASS preparation. The 2003 memorandum of understanding also contained two other partnership arrangements. First, both the JCPS staff and the college faculty had come to believe that some students register artificially low scores on the COMPASS. They believed that this was due to lack of familiarity with computer use and test taking and the need for students who have been out of school to brush up on basic skills.

As a result, the JCPS program launched an intensive, three-week college preparation program aimed at overcoming these and other difficulties of students who register low COMPASS scores. Thus far, the program has been outstandingly successful. When retested with the COMPASS, all students enrolled in the program have been able to skip at least one developmental course, and 59 percent have been able to skip more than one course. An intensive, three-week course addressing the needs of ESL students who test low on college entry examinations has recently been launched.

Scholarships. The final partnership agreement involves a commitment by both the adult education program and the college to find funds that will provide college scholarships for GED students, and to launch a marketing campaign aimed at students studying for the GED. Both college officials and adult educators place importance on the scholarship program as a way to encourage students to complete the GED and see it as a pathway to college. Approximately 13 percent of JCC's students are presently GED graduates and, according to college officials, they perform well. But those officials estimate that only 15 percent of the adults awarded GEDs in Jefferson County each year enroll in college. Both the college and the adult education staff hope that their efforts will narrow the gap.

Division of labor. In this multifaceted partnership, the JCPS adult education program and the JCC have, in effect, become a single program aimed at increasing the opportunities for underprepared adults to attend postsecondary education. The system allows both partners to do what they do best.

All parties involved agree that college developmental programs have never done an adequate job of serving low-level learners. That is the specialty of adult education, however, and it is the task that adult educators have assumed within JCC. In addition, all parties involved have been troubled by the cost to students of long stays in developmental education. Nationwide, there are concerns that students may use up too much of their Pell grant eligibility in developmental courses. By serving low-achieving students for free through adult education, the Jefferson County partners have addressed at least part of this problem.

In short, the JCPS/JCC partnership is an example of the creative use of policy tools to maximize service to undereducated students in a cost-effective way. The partners have built their system on the model of KCTCS referral and dual enrollment policies, but they have taken full advantage of the

opportunities those policies afford and augmented them with other initiatives. Developmental educators nationwide realize that there is a "gray area" where adult and developmental services overlap. JCPS/JCC have chosen to fill this gray area with free adult education content, developed in collaboration with the developmental faculty.

The importance of leadership. All parties agree that the success of this partnership is primarily due to leadership, both at the college and at the JCPS program. The use of dual enrollment to overcome the fears found at some colleges about losing head counts to adult education has been important. Even more important has been the philosophy of the president. He believes that the partnership will benefit the college by building enrollment and tuition in both developmental and credit courses. In fact, both partners take the long view of mutual benefits rather than counting near-term costs. There is a sense in which the adult education program subsidizes the college's developmental services; but there is also a sense in which the college provides large in-kind resources and helps build the scope of adult education service in Jefferson County.

The importance of special funding. It is important to recognize that the Jefferson County program has not been entirely self-financing. The initial federal learning laboratory grant, the grant from KYAE for a program coordinator, and a grant from the Lumina Foundation have been critical to its success. All parties agree that the future of the program will depend in part on whether this "soft money" can be replaced by "hard money" in the future.

Program Profile 3: Western Kentucky [71]

The partners. Although the Jefferson County transitions program is probably the largest in the state, it is by no means the only program of its sort. A similar partnership was forged in West Kentucky in 2002. In this case, the partners were the Western Kentucky Educational Cooperative and the West Kentucky Community and Technical College, based in Paducah.

Formed in the 1990s, and housed at Murray State University, the Cooperative is a partnership of 30 school districts. The major reason for forming the Cooperative was to achieve economies of scale. Most of the participating counties had small populations. By providing common services through the Cooperative, school districts believe that they are able to reduce overhead and to support specialists in various forms of instruction.

Within the Cooperative, 11 counties have joined in an adult education Collaborative. The aim of the Collaborative is to achieve the same economies of scale in adult education that the Cooperative achieves in other areas. The Cooperative/Collaborative holds the KYAE contracts for its 11 member counties and administers their programs. Approximately 6,000 adult education students are served by Collaborative county programs each year, making the Collaborative the second largest provider in the state.

[71] This profile is based on interviews with the partners augmented by documents provided by them and KYAE County Profile data.

Linking adult and developmental education. Economies of scale achieved by the Collaborative allow its staff to engage in leadership initiatives. In 2002, Collaborative staff joined with West Kentucky Community and Technical College to address the issue of transitions. The resulting program is an arrangement by which GED instruction has been upgraded, and GED students can obtain developmental education credit.

Working with college faculty, Collaborative and local county staff developed a GED curriculum that teaches math, reading, and writing at the level required for college entry. Letter grades are assigned to students who successfully complete each component, and these are honored by the college. All students in the program are dually enrolled at both the college and an adult education program.

The number of students who have completed this partnership program is fairly small to date. But the partners are moving to expand its scope by adding an online college preparatory program that will allow students to gain three academic credits at the college.

The largest enrollments in this transition partnership so far have been in Paducah/McCracken County, where the main campus of the college is located. The Paducah/McCracken adult education program (enrollment 1,500) has been administered by the school system, but it has long enjoyed a close working relationship with the college. In 2004, the McCracken County Independent School District notified KYAE that they would relinquish the contract for their county, effective July 1, 2004.

A critical mass. The transition model developed by Western Kentucky and the Collaborative is beginning to move outside consortium colleges. Nearby Marshall County has taken steps to upgrade its adult education program along similar lines, although it has not yet reached a dual-enrollment arrangement with the college.

The West Kentucky adult education partnerships are ambitious in both their aspirations to bring about transitions and in the geographical area they cover. The details are too complex for a full discussion here. However, they are an example of how pooling resources among adult education programs, as well as between those programs and a college, can create a critical mass that facilitates change.

The transition program in Western Kentucky is “home grown” – that is, it was developed within the framework of KYAE and KCTCS policy, but it received no special grant support. The Western Kentucky partnerships are also an example of how change can gather momentum. It remains to be seen how fast the model developed will grow to scale. However, the fact that it has become institutionalized both within the Collaborative and the college suggests that it will have the time and resources to grow.

D. WORKFORCE EDUCATION

In the early 1990's, workforce education was an area of great interest for both adult educators and community colleges. The interest was stimulated in part by programs at the U.S. Department of Education that supported workforce literacy pilots, and by support from the U.S. Department of Labor through the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and other programs. In the ensuing years, federal support for workforce education has waned, as has support at the state and local level. Kentucky is one of the few states that has both sustained support for this service and also institutionalized and expanded it. In this effort, the partnership between colleges and adult education programs has been key. *That partnership provides a national model for both the opportunities and difficulties of taking workforce education to scale*.

(1) Extent of Service

As discussed above, the legislative mandates of both KYAE and KCTCS require them to provide workforce education, with a special emphasis on responding to the needs for service of individual employers. Almost half the individuals enrolled in KYAE programs (43,000) were served by workforce education programs of some kind in 2002-2003. These programs are offered free of charge. All KCTCS districts also offer workforce education, primarily through contracts with employers. In 2002-2003, KCTCS institutions provided workforce training to more than 100,000 people (duplicated head count).[72]

(2) Division of Labor

These intersecting mandates may seem to establish grounds for competition between the two systems: one system is offering workforce education for free and the other is seeking to sell it. Program managers reported that turf battles sometimes occur, but they are rare. In practice, the community colleges and adult education programs have created a division of labor in the workforce area that appears beneficial to both. Adult education programs focus on basic skills. They primarily

[72] Information provided by Robert Curry of KYAE and Donna Davis of KYAE.

offer assessment services and short-duration introductory programs in both hard and soft skills (such as problem solving, teamwork, and conflict resolution).

KCTCS contract training offers more extensive training in these and other areas, including full vocational training and certification programs. These boundaries are usually respected by both colleges and adult education programs. Aside from institutional courtesy and policy constraints, one reason for this mutual respect is that most KYAE programs simply do not believe they can afford to provide more extensive workforce services. The imperatives of meeting ambitious enrollment goals with limited funding restricts them to short-term interventions.[73]

(3) Value of service

KYAE state staff and program managers believe that short-term workforce services are valuable in their own right – and they provide a linkage between adult education and colleges that extends beyond a shared mandate. The best proof of their value is that employers use and demand these services. They are also valuable as recruiting mechanisms for other KYAE and KCTCS services. Program managers interviewed for this study cited instances in which employees assessed with low basic skills enroll in adult education programs to improve their employment prospects. Reportedly, this most often happens when workers are laid off and realize that they must improve their skills to find a new job. In a few cases, companies have requested adult education providers to conduct GED courses for their workers.

Equally important, introductory hard and soft skills courses can stimulate demand for more extensive contract services offered by KCTCS. Program managers interviewed reported that referrals to KCTCS workforce development programs are common. Likewise, KCTCS workforce development programs sometimes refer companies to KYAE, and the two systems may engage in joint ventures. In short, the division of labor between the two systems appears to work well in most cases. Overall, they can be viewed as a single system aimed at the common goal of upgrading the skills of incumbent workers.

[73] Ibid. and interviews with program managers.

(4) Marketing

Most workforce instruction by KCTCS and KYAE is provided to employees through relationships developed with their employers, and most of it is provided on site at the workplace. Individual colleges engage in outreach efforts to local employers, and KCTCS employs a field staff of nine training and development coordinators. In a similar fashion, individual KYAE programs are expected to recruit employers and employees for workforce services, and they are aided by a field staff of five coordinators, all of whom are housed in community colleges.

This aggressive effort to recruit companies has paid off. In 2000-2001, KYAE reported that 11,350 people in 84 counties were served by some type of workforce education; in 2001-2002 it reported 22,164 in 91 counties; in 2002-2003 it reported about 43,000 served by workplace education.[74] If these numbers are comparable, they indicate that workforce education service has more than doubled each year since KYAE received its new charter in 2000. The number of companies served has also almost doubled each year: from 266 in 2000-2001, to 589 in 2001-2002, to more than 900 in 2002-2003.

This is an astounding performance, and it vividly demonstrates the emphasis that KYAE places on workforce education, pursuant to its legislative mandates. It also demonstrates employer demand for the services KYAE offers. This is not accidental. At both state and local levels, large investments in time and research have been devoted to determining employer needs and how best to meet them, as well as collaborating with other agencies responsible for boosting employability and economic development through the state's workforce development agencies.

But these generalities understate the depth of Kentucky's workforce education system. For purposes of this report, two dimensions of KYAE's workforce services are of greatest interest, as discussed in (5) and (6) below.

[74] Data from "Archives" section of KYAE Web site.

(5) Assessment Services

Of the 43,000 workers served in KYAE workforce education programs in 2002-2003, approximately 16,500 were served "by assessment only." This category of service may well be unique to Kentucky. Consistent with its mandate to serve the needs of employers, KYAE has an extensive program of assessing the basic skills of students for purposes of employability. In some cases, standard ABE or ESL assessment tools are used to determine the need for skills upgrades in these areas. In recent years, however, KYAE has emphasized the use of ACT's WorkKeys assessment instrument, in the belief that it provides a better measure of the contextual basic skills needed for employability.

One application of WorkKeys is the Kentucky Employability Certificate program, developed in collaboration with employers and the Kentucky Workforce Investment Board. Employability Certificates are awarded to Kentuckians who test at above average levels on the WorkKeys assessments of applied mathematics, locating information, and reading for information. A Silver Certificate is awarded to people who test at a level of 4 (of a possible 7) on these assessments; a Gold Certificate is awarded to people who test at a level of 5 or above.[75]

These skill levels are required for 80 percent of the jobs in ACT's WorkKeys database. Although the Employability Certificate program is fairly new, several thousand certificates have been awarded. KYAE hopes that the certificate will become common coinage for employers seeking to evaluate the skill levels of incumbent workers and job applicants, on a par with the GED. In the words of KYAE, its goals are to "create a pool of certified applicants that employers can hire with confidence," and to "help more Kentuckians gain employment."[76] In fact, at least one program visited in the course of this study encourages GED students to prepare for the WorkKeys assessment at the same time they prepare for the GED.

KYAE also conducts assessments of other WorkKeys skills as well as other hard and soft skills, such as computer literacy and teamwork. State KYAE staff report that workforce assessments are conducted at One Stop Career Centers, supported by Title I-B of the Workforce Investment Act.

[75] KYAE 2002-2003 report to U.S. Department of Education and KYAE Web site information on Employability Certificates.
[76] KYAE 2002-2003 report to U.S. Department of Education.

But some are also part of more comprehensive basic skills services provided to employers. They may help employers establish the need for basic skills or redesign work systems to accommodate skill needs.[77]

(6) Instructional Services

KYAE state staff report that the balance of workforce students are served by "instructional services of some kind."[78] These vary greatly among programs. The goal for workforce programs established in KYAE's authorizing legislation is to provide "functionally contextualized basic skills training… in reading, writing, problem solving, team building, and technology." Services are offered in the areas specified by the legislation as well in other basic skills areas such as written and oral communications, critical thinking, computation, and computer literacy (including introductory courses to some computer applications such as Word and Excel).

In practice, most KYAE workforce programs can only approximate the goal of being fully functionally contextualized. KYAE's Enrollment Summary for 2002-2003 lists 5,821 students in the category of Functionally Contexted Curriculum.[79] Because of financial constraints and enrollment goals, most programs cannot afford to conduct the needs assessments, curriculum development, or intensive instruction required for fully contextualized service.

Interviews with workforce education staff at a number of local programs give the impression that most of the larger programs, at least, have a repertoire of hard and soft skills lesson plans that they combine and customize to the needs of particular types of employers (such as health care, manufacturing, and hospitality). The lesson plans reviewed in this study include orientation to the subject, a brief preassessment, an instructional period, and, importantly, the requirement that students practice their skills, as well as a brief post test.

As noted earlier, most of these programs are of very short duration – as short as two to eight hours. But KYAE and many local program managers believe they provide real value to employers and

[77] KYAE staff interviews.
[78] Communication from Robert Curry of KYAE in November 2003.
[79] Data provided by Terry Puitt of KYAE staff.

employees. The short duration fits the needs of working adults and can lead to further training opportunities. Moreover, particularly in soft skills areas, such as teamwork and problem solving, short duration training may be all that employers and employees need or want. Overall, this aspect of Kentucky's workforce education system is consistent with the short duration programs that are characteristic of traditional adult education in Kentucky.

The enrollments in these programs are usually small for each employer on a monthly basis – well below 100 students. To some extent, this reflects financial constraints on adult education programs. But it also reflects the fact that KYAE workforce programs serve small employers as well as large. It also reflects ongoing relations with larger employers in which workforce programs are offered on an ongoing basis.

KYAE, KCTCS, and individual programs attempt to keep workforce education staff current with state of the art curricula, practices, and theories available from a large number of sources nationwide.

Workforce programs also include instruction aimed at helping students gain WorkKeys skills as well as skills to pass other certification tests, such as the Kentucky Manufacturing Skills Standards assessment.

(7) Funding: The Workforce Alliance

Most workforce education service provided by KYAE programs is supported by their base grant and award funding. Realizing that this funding would not be adequate to develop and deliver fully contextualized instruction, the state legislature established the Workforce Alliance, a special grant program to support more extensive service by KYAE and other workplace education providers. In 2002-2003, KYAE allocated about $1.5 million in Workforce Alliance Funds. These funds may be used to further workforce education in a variety of ways. One major goal of the Alliance, however, is to leverage industry support for upgrade training of workers by supporting partnerships between educational institutions and employers.[80]

[80] Information and data on the Workforce Alliance provided by Donna Davis of KCTCS and Terry Pruitt of KYAE.

Participating companies must form a partnership with an education provider, and a joint application must be submitted that commits both parties to a training plan and certain obligations. Companies must allow employees to attend training on company time or pay the hourly rate of employees during training sessions. Workforce Alliance funding supports task analyses, curriculum development, assessment, trainers, and instructional materials customized to meet the needs of individual employers.[81]

KYAE supports Workforce Alliance projects that partner adult education providers with companies, but the program is also a partnership among KYAE, KCTCS, and other institutions. For example, KYAE has made approximately $900,000 of its Alliance funding available to KCTCS, and joint ventures between the two systems are common in Workforce Alliance programs.

Although it may broaden their options, local adult education program directors have mixed feelings about the Workforce Alliance program.[82] Many say that they do not participate because KYAE does not allow them to count enrollments in Alliance programs toward their enrollment goals. KYAE views Alliance funding as additional grant money, and enrollment goals are established on the basis of service that programs are expected to deliver by base grant funding and awards.

In addition, many local program managers say they are reluctant to assume the administrative burden of enlisting company partners as well as applying for and reporting on Alliance grants. Also, many believe that there is not a very great market for Alliance services. They think local employers are reluctant to make the commitment required. Finally, many local programs believe that they are simply too small to develop Alliance projects. As a result, participation in Alliance projects is uneven. Nevertheless, KYAE's 2002-2003 Enrollment Summary indicates that 9,739 adults were served by Alliance funding in some way. [83]

[81] Ibid.
[82] Based on interviews with local program staff (see Appendix).
[83] Provided by Terry Pruitt of KYAE.

(8) Other Funding Sources

In addition to the Workforce Alliance, Kentucky has established a number of other grant programs to improve workforce skills. Among these are Kentucky WINS, a $6 million trust fund that supports training to help workers obtain credentials in priority job categories. Most training is strictly vocational and offered at community and technical college campuses. While some adult education providers have a relationship to WINS, it is primarily a college vocational training program. At one time, the $3 million Bluegrass State Skills Program, administered by the Kentucky Economic Development Cabinet, supported both colleges and adult education programs to provide training for companies locating in the state, but it recently shifted its focus to grants for training by company employees.

In the fall of 2003, Kentucky became eligible to participate in the Ford Foundation's Community Colleges: Bridges to Opportunity program. KCTCS solicited proposals from partnerships of colleges, regional workforce investment boards, and adult education programs to create Career Pathway programs that would establish career ladders of education and training for disadvantaged students.

(9) Issues

Although the division of labor between adult education and college programs in workforce education appears to operate smoothly in most cases, at least some adult education program managers believe that it unduly constricts their options. They believe that they can and should offer more extensive functional context instruction. And they believe that the state would benefit from this, because offering this service for free would encourage more firms and workers to take advantage of it. They believe that both policy and funding constrain the extent of adult education service in this regard.

In addition, at least some program managers believe that limitations placed on workforce education service may cause adult educators to devalue it in some parts of the state. That is, they may not devote the same effort to creating specialized curricula or partnerships in the workforce field that

they give to creating more effective traditional adult education and transitions programs. In fact, some program managers believe that low-cost workforce services are sometimes offered, in part, to help programs meet their enrollment goals when there is a shortfall.

This study did not gather data about these issues on which an opinion might be based. They are, however, issues that state level staff at KYAE and KCTCS may wish to consider.

(10) Differences among Colleges

Most KYAE programs provide workforce education services, although the extent of the service provided varies among them according to the size of their populations, demand for service by local employers, the resources available, and the initiative of their staffs. Some programs are tiny; others serve several thousand workers per year. Moreover, some programs realize the potential of the service options and funding streams available for this service better than others do. One of the more ambitious programs is offered by Owensboro Community and Technical College.

Program Profile 4: Owensboro Community and Technical College [84]

Since 2002, Owensboro Community and Technical College has managed the KYAE contract for Daviess County. But its involvement in workforce education predates the contract. The organization and enrollment figures of the Owensboro program reflect this fact. Adult Education is located in the business and industry training unit of the college. Approximately 75 percent of the college's 2,500 adult education students in 2002-2003 were served by workforce programs. Of the eight full-time staff, five are full-time industry "trainers." Thus, Owensboro's adult education program has been primarily in the business of workforce education, although it has been rapidly expanding its traditional adult education programs through aggressive recruitment and program development. In the future, these programs may rival workforce programs in enrollment.

Origins. The Owensboro's workforce program was created in response to local economic problems. Owensboro is the third largest city in Kentucky, but in recent decades it has been losing jobs to larger cities, both within and outside the state. In 2001, the local Chamber of Commerce concluded that "the development of a quality workforce was the most critical element in the community's ability to achieve long-term economic viability."[85] Employers were experiencing rapid turnover in

[84] This section is based on interviews with Owensboro staff, as well as Questionnaire responses and additional documentation provided by them.
[85] Owensboro fact sheet on workforce education, provided by Cindy Fiorella of Owensboro staff.

lower-level jobs, and they found it difficult to find employees with the foundation skills necessary. Plant closings left large number of underskilled workers stranded. Efforts to deal with this problem were fragmented. The Chamber of Commerce asked the college to "assist in developing a truly integrated workforce development and training system."[86]

Nature of service. The college responded rapidly and on many fronts. Most of its initiatives take the form of partnerships with industry and other local government agencies, and many of them link basic skills service with the college's contract training programs. Much of the adult education component of this response is based on the ACT WorkKeys assessment system and related curricula. The basic architecture of the program consists of a sequence of services available to employees and employers. The sequence is based on a foundation of skills assessments, followed by brief workshops explaining instructional options. This is followed by free short-term introductory courses in basic as well as some applied skills (mostly computer use), which is, in turn, followed by more extensive remediation supported by either grant funding or training contracts. While all clients may not follow this sequence, it defines most of the options provided by Owensboro.

Initial service. The first workforce basic skills initiative undertaken by the college was a partnership with Owensboro Mercy Health Systems – the region's largest hospital and employer. The work was supported in part by a Workforce Alliance grant of $105,000 in 2001 (which was renewed for a second year). It was also supported by substantial cash and in-kind contributions from the hospital, including a state-of-the-art learning laboratory. In the first year, the program took the form of assessments of approximately 300 hospital employees in the WorkKeys skills of reading and applied math, followed by targeted instruction to upgrade skills deficiencies. In the second year, locating information was added to the battery of assessments.[87]

Most instruction in the hospital program is high intensity and short term, making ample use of computerized instructional tools. Students who achieve high enough skills thresholds receive Kentucky Employability Certificates as well as $250 stipends. Both the college and the hospital have found the program to be highly successful. Students have achieved learning gains, and many have advanced up the career ladder at the hospital. This program is now mature and will probably continue for the indefinite future.

Another early initiative involved helping to upgrade the services offered by Skills Inc., an 11-year-old city-county skills assessment agency. Skills Inc. maintains a database of qualified workers and makes referrals to prospective employers. The college effectively replaced this agency's former assessment system by testing workers in the WorkKeys areas of reading, math, and locating information. More than 1,800 prospective employees were assessed by the college in the first nine months. Through Skills Inc., those requiring further instruction are referred to various agencies. Using its KYAE base grant funding, the college developed a SkillTrain center that provides targeted instruction in WorkKeys skills to approximately 200 individuals. Most instruction is offered on campus, but the computerized service is available via a satellite link to the local One Stop Center.

Further services. Taking its services a step further, the Owensboro adult education program partnered with the College's contract training program to conduct industry profiling of skill needs,

[86] Ibid.
[87] Information and data on which this discussion is based were submitted by Owensboro staff (see Appendix).

using Dacum and WorkKeys analyses. The goal is "to ensure the best match for industries looking to hire new employees as well as those assessing their incumbent workers for retraining." This has resulted in enrollments in the college's SkillTrain and traditional adult education programs, as well as functional context instruction for individuals offered under contracts.

Owensboro also provides an "emergency response" system of assessment, and short-term instruction. It awards Employability Certificates to workers who are displaced due to plant closings or downsizing. The program has also had an impact outside Daviess County. On request, assessments are conducted in neighboring counties, and firms in those counties may take advantage of Owensboro's contract training services.

The college's adult education staff considers all of these different services to be important in increasing employability. The staff believes that services that appear fairly elementary (such as assessments) can be of great value in helping workers to find new jobs or progress up career ladders. They can also help employers and employees to invest in skills upgrading.

In the case of some hard and soft skills, short-term interventions can help workers cross thresholds that will improve their prospects. The Kentucky Employability Certificate is now becoming common enough in the Owensboro area that it can give workers a leg up in finding better jobs. In fact, the Owensboro staff believes that the Certificate has the potential to supplant (or at least complement) the GED as a pathway to opportunity. Finally, all aspects of the program raise awareness of the need for more intensive training by at least some workers and companies.

Keys to success. Clearly, Owensboro has constructed an exceptionally robust workforce education program in a very short period of time. The program staff estimates that more than 4,000 individuals have benefited from the workforce component thus far. They estimate that instruction averages only about one to three hours per student, although duration differs significantly in different aspects of the program. When asked why and how the program has been so successful, program staff offer four answers.

First, they cite presidential leadership. The college's president believes that adult education in general, and workforce education in particular, are part of the core mission of a comprehensive community college. In fact, workforce education is listed as one of the four goals for the college in its mission statement. The college makes extensive in-kind contributions to the adult/workforce program. All staff members are compensated at the same rate as comparable college staff. Adult/workforce students enjoy the same status as other students.

Second, they credit the funding options and policy tools made available by both KYAE and KCTCS, as well as leadership and support from the state. The policy framework has mandated and enabled the development of an industry-responsive workforce program. Base funding has provided the program with money to bring to the table. The provision of computerized assessment and instructional material by KYAE has been key. Special grant funding has been indispensable in both launching and sustaining this complex pattern of service. The staff believes that the Owensboro program could not have been launched or sustained without special funding, above and beyond the other resources available.

Third, the program staff considers it important that the Owensboro program was essentially built from scratch. A new team was recruited to implement it. There was no need to overcome old agendas. The result is an organizational culture focused squarely on using all the tools available to improve employment opportunities through basic skills instruction. This culture manifests itself in both large ways and small. For example, workforce education staff members are called "trainers" rather than "teachers."

Finally, the Owensboro staff believes that the initiative and continuing support of the business community and other human service agencies has been essential. Both the Chamber of Commerce and individual firms have grasped the importance of workforce training and been prepared to do something about it. Other human resource agencies have been open to collaboration. Like most other outstanding programs in Kentucky, the Owensboro workforce education program has been an exercise in forging multiple partnerships, both within the college and with outside agencies of many different kinds.

Lessons learned. Aside from possible limitations on the availability of special funding, it appears that most of the factors contributing to success at Owensboro could be implemented in many other locations in Kentucky. And indeed, they are. Interviews with staff at Central Kentucky Technical College, Marshall County Adult Education, and the Western Kentucky Educational Collaborative indicate that many of the approaches and tools described at Owensboro are being applied elsewhere.

In some respects, workforce education in Kentucky is still evolving. The use of tools such as WorkKeys, the Kentucky Manufacturing Skills Standards Certificate, and the Kentucky Employability Certificate differ among programs, as do relationships with contract training. Moreover, many programs are still attempting to determine the most appropriate curricula for this type of instruction. Nevertheless, workforce education is taken very seriously by many programs, and it is growing rapidly. There appears to be convergence around a common model, and the Owensboro program vividly demonstrates the outlines of that model.

APPENDIX

PERSONS CONSULTED FOR THIS REPORT

The following persons were interviewed by phone and/or in person and/or they provided information by e-mail.

KYAE State Staff

Cheryl King – Vice President for Adult Education
Robert Curry
Jacqueline Korengel
Terry Pruitt
Reecie Stagnolia
Terry Tackett

KCTCS State Staff

Keith Bird – Chancellor of KCTCS
Donna Davis
Shauna King-Simms
Linda Morefield
Jim Phillips
Terry Scales
Keith Stephens

Kentucky Virtual University

Randolph Hollingsworth

Site Visit to Jefferson Community College – January 20, 2004

Tony Newberry – President, Jefferson District
Susan Carlisle and Lisa Stephen – Carroll County Adult Education
Julie Scoskie and Trish Schnieder – Jefferson County Public Schools
Donna Woods – Transition Partnership

Site Visit to Central Kentucky Technical College – January 22, 2004

Ronald Baugh – President, Central Kentucky Technical College
Kristin Tiedeman – Director, Adult Education
Jim White and Martha Fightmaster – Workforce Education
Peggy Greenwald and Janice Crane – Winchester/Clark Literacy Council

Site visit to Mayo Campus of Big Sandy Community and Technical College – January 23, 2004

David Pelphrey – Interim Director of Mayo Campus
Jennifer Leedy – Director, Adult Education
Bobby McCool – Vice President of Institutional Affairs
Bobby McCord – Regional Workforce Education Coordinator

Telephone Conference with Owensboro Community and Technical College Staff – February 9, 2003

Vicki Boyd – Director of Adult Education Services
Nicholas Brake – Dean of Institutional Effectiveness
Cindy Fiorella – Dean of Community, Workforce, and Economic Development

Telephone Conference Sponsored by West Kentucky Community and Technical College – February 24, 2004

Paul McInturff – Vice President, Institutional Advancement, WKCTC
Vicki Bloodworth – Instructor, Marshall County Adult Education
Dan Edington – Director of Training Center, WKCTC
Maria Flynn – Dean of Developmental Education, WKCTC
Keith Lambert – Director, Paducah-McCracken County Adult Education
Jim King – Coordinator of Adult Education, Western Kentucky Educational Cooperative
Karen McLeod – Director, Marshall County Adult Education Center

Group Meeting with Community College Adult Education Directors Hosted by Central Kentucky Technical College and Convened by Shauna King-Simms, KCTCS – January 21, 2004

Participants included:

Cris Crowley – Madisonville Community College
Joyce Flynn – Somerset Community College
Shauna King-Simms – KCTCS
Jennifer Leedy – Big Sandy Community and Technical College
Brenda Morris – Southeast Community College
Kristin Tiedeman – Central Kentucky Technical College
Peg Ramsey – Gateway Community and Technical College
Anne Reeder – Maysville Community College
Pamela Wilson – Henderson Community College


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